

# JUDAISM

Ambassador College

OCT 29 1975

LIBRARY

## HOW SHALL A BELIEVING JEW VIEW CHRISTIANITY?

Hershel Matt

## IS THERE A JEWISH WAY TO FIGHT?

Michael Brown

## JEWISH FICTION IN AMERICA

Richard J. Fein

## RECONSTRUCTIONISM AND *HOKHMAH*

Barbara Ann Swyhart

ISSUE No. 96 / VOLUME 24 / NUMBER 4 / \$2.25

FALL 1975

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

## STATEMENT OF SPONSORSHIP

The American Jewish Congress is sponsoring the publication of JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF JEWISH LIFE AND THOUGHT as part of its basic policy "to stimulate an informed awareness of Jewish affairs, encourage Jewish scholarship and adequate opportunities for Jewish education, and generally foster the affirmation of Jewish religious, cultural, and historic identity."

JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

The Board of Editors, composed of distinguished scholars and thinkers drawn from every segment of Jewish life, is vested with full authority and responsibility for the contents of this Journal. Views and opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the American Jewish Congress, which is sponsoring the publication of this Journal as a service to the American Jewish community and to all who seek to understand the nature of the Jewish tradition and its modern significance.

*American Jewish Congress*

JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL is published by the American Jewish Congress. It appears in January, April, July, and October. Office of Publication: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Re-entered as second-class matter at Post Office, New York City, N.Y. Subscription in the United States and Canada, \$8.00 for one year, \$14.00 for two years, \$19.00 for three years; foreign subscription, \$9.00. Special rate for bulk (10 or more) and student subscriptions, \$5.00. Single issue, \$2.25; single issue abroad, \$2.50. Make checks payable to the order of JUDAISM, and send to: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. A month's notice must be given of any change of address.

US ISSN 0022-5762

The Board of Editors invites articles, communications, comments and discussion for publication. Address: Editors, JUDAISM, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Copyright © 1975 by the American Jewish Congress.



# JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Issue No. 96 / Volume 24 / Number 4 / Fall 1975

<i>The First Reader</i>	R.G.	387
<i>How Shall A Believing Jew View Christianity?</i>	HERSHEL MATT	391
<i>Jewish Fiction In America</i>	RICHARD J. FEIN	406
<i>The Americanization of Jewish Education</i>	WALTER I. ACKERMAN	416
<i>Reconstructionism: Hokhmah As An Ethical Principle</i>	BARBARA ANN SWYHART	436
<i>The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea</i>	ARTHUR GREEN	446
<i>The Question of Secular Judaism</i>	TSVI BISK	457
<i>Is There A Jewish Way to Fight?</i>	MICHAEL BROWN	466
<i>The Sh'ma Reconsidered</i>	HERMAN L. HOROWITZ	476
<i>The Jews of Cochín</i>	MATTHEW D. SLATER	482

## REVIEWS

<i>A History of Judaism:</i>		
<i>Volume I, From Abraham to Maimonides</i>		
by Daniel Jeremy Silver		
<i>Volume II, Europe and The New World</i>		
	ALAN L. BERGER	499
<i>A Passion For Truth</i>		
by Abraham Joshua Heschel	ALAN L. BERGER	499
<i>Jewish Reflections On Death</i>		
ed. by Jack Riemer	DAVID NOVAK	502
	and	
	SAMUEL C. KLAGSBRUN	507

INDEX to Volume 24	510
--------------------	-----

## Editor

ROBERT GORDIS

## Managing Editor

RUTH B. WAXMAN

## Contributing Editors

JACOB B. AGUS, Baltimore, Md. • SELIG ADLER, Buffalo, N.Y. • ALEXANDER ALTMAN, Waltham, Mass. • MAX ARZT, New York, N.Y. • SALO W. BARON, New York, N.Y. • MEIR BEN-HORIN, Philadelphia, Pa. • HUGO BERGMAN, Jerusalem, Israel • BEN ZION BOKSER, New York, N.Y. • EUGENE B. BOROWITZ, New York, N.Y. • WILLIAM G. BRAUDE, Providence, R.I. • ARTHUR A. COHEN, New York, N.Y. • GERSON D. COHEN, New York, N.Y. • EMIL L. FACKENHEIM, Toronto, Canada • DAVID FLUSSER, Jerusalem, Israel • MARVIN FOX, Columbus, O. • SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, Pittsburgh, Pa. • MAURICE FRIEDMAN, San Diego, Cal. • THEODORE FRIEDMAN, Jerusalem, Israel • NAHUM N. GLATZER, Waltham, Mass. • JUDAH GOLDIN, New Haven, Conn. • ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN, Jerusalem, Israel • MAX GRUENWALD, Millburn, N.J. • MENAHEM HARAN, Jerusalem, Israel • WILL HERBERG, Madison, N.J. • ARTHUR HYMAN, New York, N.Y. • ERICH ISAAC, Irvington, N.Y. • MAX KADUSHIN, New York, N.Y. • MORDECAI M. KAPLAN, New York, N.Y. • MILTON R. KONVITZ, Ithaca, N.Y. • ARTHUR J. LELYVELD, Cleveland, Ohio • SOL LIPTZIN, Jerusalem, Israel • LEVI A. OLAN, Dallas, Texas, • HARRY M. ORLINSKY, New York, N.Y. • JAKOB PETUCHOWSKI, Cincinnati, O. • LEO PFEFFER, New York, N.Y. • JOACHIM PRINZ, Newark, N.J. • EMANUEL RACKMAN, New York, N.Y. • NATHAN ROTENSTREICH, Jerusalem, Israel • ZALMAN M. SCHACHTER, Winnipeg, Canada • DAVID S. SHAPIRO, Milwaukee, Wis. • DAVID WOLF SILVERMAN, New York, N.Y. • ERNST SIMON, Jerusalem, Israel • AARON STEINBERG, London, England • SHEMARYAHU TALMON, Jerusalem, Israel • SINAI UCKO, Hertzliah, Israel • DAVID WEISS, New York, N.Y. • PAUL WEISS, New Haven, Conn. • TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN, New York, N.Y. • MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD, New York, N.Y.

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a world-view on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

*Judaism* will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—*From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

## *The First Reader*

For nearly two millennia, Judaism and Christianity have been locked in a love-hate embrace. This uniquely ambivalent relationship has evoked a large variety of responses, among both Jews and Christians. They range from attitudes of total and unrelenting hostility, now, fortunately, on the decline, to simplistic claims that "the things that unite us" are all that matter. It is between these two poles that the thoughtful Jew and the thoughtful Christian will seek to find his place. Yet here, too, there is no lack of paradigms for his examination.

One such position was enunciated by Franz Rosenzweig. He maintained that both faith-systems are permanently valid and true, though for different segments of the human race, Judaism for the Jew, Christianity for the rest of mankind. On the Christian side, his theory was defended by Eugene Fisher in his paper, "Typical Jewish Misunderstandings of Christianity" (JUDAISM, Vol. 22, No. 1, Winter 1973).

*Hershel J. Matt*, in his paper, "How Shall a Believing Jew View Christianity?" adopts a similar view from a Jewish perspective. With this theory as a basis, he proceeds to examine the various differences alleged to exist between Judaism and Christianity. He concludes that they are far less clearcut than is usually assumed, the difference often being one of emphasis and coloration. He, therefore, concludes that these variations should not prevent the growth of a genuine respect for each faith by the adherents of the other.

The twentieth century has seen the emergence of a substantial body of creative writing by American-Jewish authors, primarily in the form of the novel and the short story. While the history of this respectable body of literature, going back to Mary Antin and Abraham Cahan, has been chronicled more than once, *Richard J. Fein*, in his article "Jewish Fiction in America," offers some very significant insights into the states of American Jewish literature and the basic motifs and drives that characterize them. I believe that this sensitive and probing paper is indispensable for anyone who wishes to understand the inner meaning of American-Jewish literature and, for that matter, the nature of the American-Jewish experience itself.

The American-Jewish community is no longer of recent immigrant origin. In his paper, "The Americanization of Jewish Education," *Walter Ackerman* surveys the history of Jewish education in the United States. He points out that other Diaspora communities were imbued with a strong consciousness that Jewish culture was at least of equal rank with



that of the surrounding population, so that there was a strong motivation for intensive Jewish education. In the United States, however, which offered American Jews unparalleled individual liberties and opportunities, the conviction was general that "America was different," from which the implication was drawn that the general culture was superior. As a result, Jewish education has often been bedeviled by the desire to attenuate and "adjust" it to the American environment, instead of underscoring its distinctive character and system of values. The writer urges a modification of this attitude in order to intensify the content of Jewish education in America.

While Reconstructionism has been nurtured and developed by various scholars, rabbis and laymen, it bears the imprint of the dominant personality and thought of Mordecai M. Kaplan.

Generally, the movement has been conceived of in terms of religious naturalism or humanistic religion. In her study, "Reconstructionism: *Hokhmah* as an Ethical Principle," *Barbara Ann Swyhart* approaches the thought-content of Reconstructionism from another vantage point. She finds the *fons et origo* of the movement in its ethical thrust, its concern for the improvement of human conduct, both individual and collective. This ethical emphasis is rooted in the traditional concept of "the Covenant," which Kaplan has reinterpreted as Jewish peoplehood that is to serve as a prototype of ethical nationalism for the world.

One of the best known characteristics of Jewish religious thought has been the effort to eliminate, or at least attenuate, the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic concept of God, the picturing of God in physical form, performing human acts and feeling human emotions. Beginning in the Bible, gaining momentum in the Talmudic era, and reaching its apogee of influence in medieval Jewish philosophy, this emphasis upon the rational and the intellectual came to be regarded as the essentially "normative tradition" in Judaism. Passages which depicted God in unabashedly physical terms, performing characteristically human activities, were either interpreted figuratively or explained as minor and aberrant tendencies on the periphery of Judaism.

Contemporary Jewish scholarship has rediscovered the importance of the mystical strand in Judaism. This new trend has served to correct the previous imbalance by underscoring the complete authenticity within the Jewish tradition of anthropomorphism and anthropopathism.

In his paper, "The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea: Interpretation of an Aggadic Motif," *Arthur Green* presents a striking example of this tendency in Rabbinic legend. He thus demonstrates that the non-rationalistic elements of "normative Judaism" are

authentic aspects of this tradition, and he relates these traits to the contemporary emphasis upon the mystical, the supernatural and the irrationally incomprehensible.

Even if one regards this tendency as going too far in the opposite extreme, in accordance with the human proclivity for the "pendulum syndrome," this element must be included in any full understanding of the tradition. What meaning it has for modern Judaism and how it is to be integrated into the whole remains part of the unfinished agenda for rationalists and non-rationalists alike.

The preoccupation of American Jewry, in general, and its leaders and thinkers, in particular, with the State of Israel—its present and its future, its problems and its potential—is intense, on-going and thoroughly justified. Readers will recall the issue of this journal which appeared in the Spring of 1973 and was dedicated in its entirety to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the State of Israel, and dealt with all facets of life and thought in the homeland. Generally, though by no means exclusively, Diaspora Jews have approached the State of Israel from some type of religious perspective, even in our secular and secularized age.

It is, therefore, interesting to "have the tables turned" by *Tsvi Bisk*, an American who has settled in Israel, in his paper, "The Question of Secular Judaism." He argues vigorously that all formulations of Judaism in religious terms are passé, and buttresses his position by his observations on the character of American Jewry today. His trenchant and uncompromising stance should stimulate hard thinking among sensitive and concerned members of the Jewish community.

In recent years, the attitudes of the Jewish tradition toward war and peace have been frequently examined from positions that represent a wide spectrum. They range from extreme pacifism to the glorification of the God of Israel as "a man of war." As is generally the case, the truth is to be found in neither extreme, but the preponderant emphasis in Judaism is upon peace as the greatest of all blessings.

In his paper, "Is There A Jewish Way To Fight?" *Michael Brown* analyzes the treatment of war in contemporary Israeli literature. One of the most important implications of his paper is to rebut the stereotype of the modern Israeli as a war-monger reveling in bloodshed, a picture that is being sedulously cultivated today by Arab propagandists and their allies.

The *Sh'ma* has long been regarded as the single most important prayer in Judaism. It is taught to the youngest children, is triumphantly repeated at the close of Yom Kippur each year, and constitutes part of the death-bed *Viddui*, "confession," recited by the Jew before his last

moments. Its religious significance has accordingly been expounded from many points of view by Jewish thinkers and teachers in all ages.

However, even the loftiest expressions of faith and insight are rooted in the soil of concrete historical conditions. In recent years there have come to light the texts of suzerainty treaties between kings and their vassals in the ancient Middle East. Many scholars have seen in these secular treaties the prototype of a unique concept in Biblical religion—the doctrine of the Covenant between God and Israel.

In his paper, "The Sh'ma Reconsidered," *Herman L. Horowitz* proposes to relate the contents and structure of the *Sh'ma* to the format of these ancient Middle Eastern treaties.

Centuries ago the Book of Isaiah described the Jewish people as *am olam*, a phrase which has, for obvious reasons, long been translated as "the eternal people." The Hebrew term, however, may also be interpreted as "world people." Accordingly, the Hebrew version of the great work of the Russian-Jewish historian, Simon Dubnow, is called *Divrei Yemei Am Olam*, "A History of a World-People."

It is noteworthy that, in spite of the intimate and unbreakable link between the Jewish people and its religion, Judaism has also been espoused by peoples of varying ethnic and "racial" backgrounds. The Falashas, or Black Jews of Ethiopia, the yellow-skinned Jews of Kai-Feng in China, and the Brown Jews of India, the Bene Israel, represent the other pigmented groups within the Jewish Family. There have even been theories, fanciful to be sure, which link the American Red Indian to the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Thus, Judaism has commanded the allegiance of all races—white, black, brown, yellow and red!

In a careful study, *Matthew D. Slater* presents a history of "The Cochin Jews," a story of the Jews of India, replete with human interest. It has important implications for the attitude of white Jews toward their darker skinned brothers and sisters who have lived in Judaism and have died for it as well.

R.G.

We announce with sorrow the passing of

## **Rabbi MAX ARZT**

an honored member of the Board of Contributing Editors  
of JUDAISM. We share the sense of loss of his family and  
of all Israel.

*Yehi zikhro barukh!*



# *How Shall A Believing Jew View Christianity?*

HERSHEL MATT

## I

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUDAISM AND

Christianity is, on a theological level, essentially ambiguous. The relationship between individual Jews and Christians is, on a psychological level, almost inevitably ambivalent. And the relationship between the Jewish and Christian communities has been, on the historical level, so frequently marked by Christian persecution, by Jewish fear, and by mutual hostility, suspicion, and mistrust that it is inherently problematical. No wonder, then, that through the ages Jews and Christians have almost never been in a position to confront squarely or explore fruitfully the true nature of their relationship. Indeed, our own age may be the very first in which such confrontation and exploration are possible. And even for us, any chance that the problems can be solved and the ambivalence resolved depends on whether the basic ambiguity can be clarified.

## II

The heart of the ambiguity in the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is the dual reality of their similarity and difference.

The similarities are numerous and basic, flowing from the common acceptance of the Hebrew Scriptures as Holy Scriptures: e.g., the common affirmation of the Creator God who formed the universe by His will and man in His image; who established His covenant with the Children of Israel and redeemed them from bondage; who revealed His word and will at Sinai; who gives commands to human beings, judges, rewards and punishes them, and forgives them when they truly repent; who hears their prayers and responds; and who promises a messianic era of judgment and redemption.

In the face of such mighty similarities, shall we say perhaps that the two religions are really but variants of one religion, and that any differences between them are but minor? But how can we possibly say so, once we even begin to set forth the differences: on the one hand, Christ and his Universal Church; on the other hand, the People Israel and The Law? Surely, the inherent duality of relationship between Judaism and Christianity—however puzzling it is—must be maintained: the two faiths are at once fundamentally similar and fundamentally different!

---

HERSHEL J. MATT *has served in the congregational rabbinate, most recently in Princeton, N.J. He has long been interested in the interfaith dialogue.*

## III

Were we dealing with an exclusively historical phenomenon or an entirely theoretical issue, this duality of relationship, though it might intrigue us, would not trouble us. What makes us troubled—religiously disturbed and psychologically ambivalent—is that issues of existential truth are at stake. As a believing Jew, I know that God, through the Covenant which He has made with my People Israel and through the Torah-of-truth which He has given us, has revealed all that human beings need to know about Him and about our relationship to Him and to each other. Why, then, should there be another Covenant and another revelation? Even assuming that somehow I could come to terms with such duplication, what if that second Covenant, that second revelation, affirms something that is *not* included in my original Covenant (e.g., that God was in Christ, that the messiah has come) and denies something that *is* included (e.g., that Israel's Law is still binding, that it is a fully adequate channel of God's word and of His love)? How can such a second Covenant be equally valid? Yet Christianity claims its Covenant with the same One God to be of equal—indeed of superior—validity with Israel's own Covenant!

Must I, therefore, as a believing Jew, deny the Christian claim and impugn the full validity of Christianity, granting only its partial validity? ("What is true in Christianity is not new, and what is new is not true.") Or is there another possible approach to the two faiths, whereby their respective claims to full validity can both be accommodated?

Let us explore the rationale for each of the covenants—and see.

## IV

Why the Covenant with Israel?

God's original hope—it is clear from the Torah—was that through creation-in-His-image all human beings would not only *know* right from wrong but would consistently choose the right, simultaneously advancing God's purpose and promoting their own true well-being. The Biblical stories of the Garden of Eden and of Cain and Abel are parables of the frustration of God's hope; hence, the Flood and the subsequent establishment of the Covenant with Noah and the new mankind. But human beings again showed themselves to be sinful (witness the story of the Tower of Babel), too unaccepting of God's authority, too unmindful of His word, too ready to deface the image in which they were created.

It is at this point that God establishes His covenant with Abraham—singling out one man and his descendants; concentrating, as it were, upon one family of humankind; providing the seed of Abraham with a fuller measure of instruction and guidance, demands and discipline ("to keep the way of the Lord, doing righteousness and justice")—not to the

detriment or neglect of the rest of humanity, however, but to their greater benefit ("through you shall all the nations of the world be blessed"). At Sinai, the Covenant was renewed and confirmed with the entire People Israel, called to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation," to serve—as later prophets declared—as God's light and witness to the nations, until the day when all would acknowledge the One True God.

## V

But what of those individuals among the nations who, drawn by that light and example, wished immediately to cast off the idolatries and immoralities of paganism and to take upon themselves immediately "the yoke of the kingship of heaven" and "to keep the way of the Lord"? Was such a course possible, was such a step permissible? There are clear indications—in the Hebrew Scriptures to some extent, in the New Testament and contemporary writings to a greater extent—that not only was it possible and permissible for non-Israelites to join the Covenant Community of Israel, but that many actually did so. (There is some evidence that, on occasion, there were even missionary efforts on the part of Jews.) Indeed, according to the estimates—perhaps exaggerated—of some historians, at one point as many as ten per cent of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire were Jewish!

To convert to Judaism, however, meant not only to affirm one's personal faith in YHVH, the One True God of Israel, but to become part of the *People* Israel and to accept the discipline of Israel's entire regimen of holy living—including circumcision, kashrut, shabbat, etc. Not all who were attracted by the light of the Torah found themselves able to make such a complete commitment. It thus came about, around the turn of our era, that in addition to those who actually became full-fledged members of the House of Israel, there were countless others who surrendered their pagan ways and became "fearers of the Lord." But, although those who came near in these two ways—either through full conversion or through acceptance of something less—numbered in the hundreds of thousands, they obviously constituted but a small fraction of mankind.

The Christian claim is that at this juncture in history—about two thousand years ago—the same One True God who had long before revealed Himself to the People Israel then decided to reveal Himself—or perhaps had decided long before to reveal Himself at that time—in the "Christ Event," establishing the New Covenant. Through this New Covenant in Christ—so Christianity claims—God has now made available to all mankind His word and way, His love and forgiveness, true salvation and redemption.

## VI

How shall a believing Jew respond to this central Christian claim?

It would seem apparent that, as a Jew, he cannot acknowledge its truth. From the Torah text-and-tradition he knows that God's covenant with Israel is forever valid; from his personal appropriation of the central events of his people's past—again and again being redeemed from bondage, again and again receiving the Torah—he knows that this Covenant is real; from his daily personal experience he knows that this Covenant is adequate. Whatever is claimed by the Christian to be provided through Christ, the Jew had already received a thousand years and more before the Christ of Christians ever appeared. Christ fulfils no need for the Jew and offers him nothing new. How, then, *could* a Jew possibly acknowledge the validity of the Christian claim?

And yet, cannot a believing Jew grant the possibility that what is not new to the Jew—or even addressed to him—might yet involve something new when addressed to others? Can a Jew not grant the possibility (as Rosenzweig and Herberg have taught<sup>1</sup>) that an alternate form of God's Covenant with Israel was now being made available to the rest of humanity? This new (form of the) Covenant would be with the same one-and-only God of Israel; those who would enter it through accepting Christ (the one-man embodiment of Israel) would thereby become linked to the People Israel—but as a de-nationalized, de-ethnized, de-particularized form of Israel. (Christians sometimes speak of themselves as the “New Israel” or “Spiritual Israel.”) The role of this New (branch of) Israel would be to go forth to the ends of the earth and seek to spread the New (form of the) Covenant—the de-nationalized Torah way of the Lord—and, thus, through Christ, bring all mankind to the God of Israel. The role of the original People Israel (“Israel of the flesh”) would be to remain identifiably apart in holy separation—continuing to be faithful to the original (form of the) Covenant, continuing to serve as a living model of holy community: a community of true righteousness and justice, true love and compassion.

## VII

Herein lies the key to the mysterious phenomenon of the basic similarity-and-difference between Christianity and Judaism. All of the genuine differences between them—major and minor, obvious and subtle—can be seen, upon careful examination, to stem from this fundamental difference of role in the divine purpose and of situation in the world.

---

1. See Will Herberg, “Christianity and Judaism: Their Unity and Difference,” *Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXI, 2, (April, 1953) for an incisive analysis and creative extension of Rosenzweig's seminal thinking on this whole subject. I am deeply indebted to, and have borrowed heavily from, Herberg's presentation.

## VIII

One crucial set of differences stems directly from the differing nature of the two *vehicles* of revelation: in the one case, the *People* Israel, bearers of the Torah; in the other case, the *Person* of Christ, one-man embodiment of Israel and the Torah. Through their respective vehicles, Judaism and Christianity affirm, God makes known His word and will and way, His resources and even His indwelling presence. ("I shall dwell in the midst of Israel;" "God was in Christ.") In both cases the recipients of the revelation are, through that very revelation, constituted into a community. Yet the nature of the community and the manner of entering are significantly different. In the case of Judaism, the members are normally *born into* the covenant community (except for occasional converts), as are also, therefore, their brothers and sisters and cousins. The Jewish community thus has an ethnic base; the intense we-feeling is almost familial; the pattern of Jewish holiness has a constantly corporate reference and dimension. In the case of Christianity, since the members of the covenant community identify with each other and with God through the Person of Christ, their religious identity, though also corporate, tends to be more individualized and privatized—and, so, too, their life of prayer, their sense of sin, their yearning for forgiveness, their awareness of God's judgment and love, and their vision of salvation. Similarly even with the hope for life after death. For the Jew, the grounds for that hope are through the Torah granted to the People Israel; fulfillment of that hope is envisioned as a function of the vindication and redemption of Israel; and the locale of that fulfillment is identified as the (perhaps expanded) Land of Israel. (The Vision of the Dry Bones in Ezekiel is extremely apt in its portrayal of the resurrection of individuals as an expression of the revival of the People.) For the Christian, that hope—grounded as it is in the resurrection of the Person of Christ—tends to highlight his own individual resurrection.

## IX

A second set of differences relates to "The Law." "Law" has various meanings, and in assessing the alleged differences between Judaism and Christianity with regard to "the Law" it is important to distinguish among them.

Law in the sense of "ritual law"—kashrut, circumcision, and shabbat, for example—which serves as a constant reminder of God's Covenant with the People Israel and as a means for distinguishing that people from the other peoples of the world, would obviously not be appropriate for the New Israel, which was meant to encompass all peoples. (The word "*ot*," sign, when used in connection with circumcision and shabbat, and the word "*kadosh*," set-apart-as-holy, when used in connection with

shabbat and kashrut, both involve consecration, not only in the usual meanings of holiness but, also, in the sense of separation and distinctiveness.) In this first usage of the term "law," therefore, it is correct to say that "The Law" constitutes a significant difference between Judaism and Christianity. (Christianity, of course, gradually developed its own body of ritual law, which serves to distinguish Christians from non-Christians.)

With regard to law in the sense of "moral law," the two faiths agree that it is essential to the life of holiness. Yet the claim is often made that in their approaches to the moral law the two faiths are radically different. Judaism—it is claimed—is characterized by a stress upon divine sternness of command and human dread of punishment for the constant failure to fulfill the ever-present "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not"—and that Judaism is, therefore, plagued with a grim preoccupation with a "book-keeping morality" of debits and credits, and casuistic concern with the technicalities of the forbidden and the permitted. In sharp contrast—it is claimed—is the Christian emphasis on love: God's love for man, man's love for God, and the love of man for fellowman. Is there anything to this claim? For the most part, such a contrast is ridiculously (and unlovingly!) false. On the one hand, the Hebrew Scriptures—which are presumably the source of this supposed Jewish over-emphasis on strict moral law—are also filled with passages about this very three-fold love! (Indeed, the original source of Christian teaching about love is in those very Jewish Scriptures!) On the other hand, the New Testament places great emphasis on certain "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," stressing, at least as strongly as does Judaism, their absoluteness and bindingness, and the dire consequences of their violation or inadequate fulfillment. Furthermore, a major branch of Christianity has been characterized by a highly developed body of canon law and a whole tradition of casuistic interpretation. Nevertheless, there is perhaps a grain of truth in the alleged difference between the two faiths regarding the moral law. In the Christian situation, partly because of the keen expectation among the earliest Christians of the imminent return of Christ and partly because of the emphasis on conversion through the personal acceptance of Christ as lord and savior, the stance has tended to be "charismatic;" in the Jewish situation, partly because of the corporate dimension of the holy life and partly because of the assumption that life in the present world-and-age would continue indefinitely, the stance tended to be halakhic<sup>2</sup>—and in the halakhic perspective each act *does* have definite social obligations, and each particular situation *does* call

---

2. See Monford Harris, "Halakhah and Charisma," JUDAISM, I, 1 (Jan. 1952) for the very suggestive use and development of these terms. See also, his two further articles, "The Bifurcated Life," JUDAISM VIII, 2 (Spring 1957) and "Interim Theology," JUDAISM VII, 4 (Fall 1958).



for careful scrutiny before a decision is made and for genuine accountability afterward.

With regard to law in the sense of "legalism," it is sometimes claimed that Judaism urges—regarding both ritual and moral law—strict adherence merely to the letter of the law, punctilious observance solely of externals, mechanical performance by rote—in contrast to a Christian emphasis upon the spirit of the law and upon reverent inwardness. This supposed difference, like the previous one, is basically false; indeed, it constitutes more of a caricature than a characterization of Judaism. On the level of general principle, Judaism urges the importance of *kavanah*, direction of the heart to the loving fulfillment of the divine command and the joyful performance of God's will. On the level of actual practice, Christians—no less than Jews—must be assumed to be subject to the peril of rote prayer and routinized ritual, of grudging performance of moral obligations, and of hypocritical words and deeds. It may well be, however—because of the larger scope of Jewish ritual and the greater emphasis on the corporate dimension of life—that there is greater resort to law in Judaism and, hence, greater risk that law may degenerate into legalism.

There is still another sense of "law" wherein Judaism and Christianity are said to differ: law in the sense of "social justice," "law and order." Is there any basis for the widespread view that Judaism sees the stability and viability of any social order as dependent upon just law, whereas Christianity sees as sufficient the simple practice of love among its members? As regards Christianity, it is true, once again, that because the earliest Christians felt sure of Christ's imminent return, with its messianic dissolution of human government, that they could afford, in the short run, to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," could preoccupy themselves with the spread of the Gospel, and could depend upon the resources of the loving community. As the hope for an early return diminished, however, Christianity came to accept the need for government and enforceable justice on a continuing basis. (Through the centuries Christians have had to face—but perhaps have never fully resolved—the question of how great should be their involvement as Christians in the governance of society, and how great their responsibility.) As regards Judaism, it is true that whenever Jews have lived in their own land, or in other lands where they had a large degree of autonomy, they have recognized as central to their task of holy living the establishment of a just social order in accordance with Torah law. (When under the jurisdiction of non-Jewish governments, Jews have had to face the question of whether and to what extent they were still bound by the civil and criminal laws of the Torah; often the "law of the land" has come to displace—or, more exactly, to suspend—the laws of the Torah.) In this sense alone one can say that Judaism has stressed justice

over love. It has recognized that although, ideally, love transcends justice, in the absence of a just government which protects basic rights and imposes basic obligations, complete dependence upon personal love will almost inevitably result in tyrannical subjugation of the weak by the strong—for the temptation to sin is ever-present.

## X

Another issue which is often said to constitute a crucial difference between Judaism and Christianity is the belief in original sin. Christianity is inherently pessimistic about human beings—it is claimed—because it recognizes, even emphasizes, that all human beings are under the burden and taint of the original sin of Adam and Eve, and are, therefore, bound to sin. Judaism—it is claimed—by not accepting this doctrine remains inherently optimistic.

To what extent is this contrast valid? It cannot be denied that certain Christian formulations of the doctrine of original sin do insist that every human being must inevitably sin. Other Christian formulations, however, make a significant distinction: in theory, no human being needs to sin; in practice, all human beings known to us actually do. Each moment in life presents man with the theoretical possibility of avoiding sin; the possibility turns out, however, to be an “impossible possibility.” In any case, whether or not authentic Christianity draws such a distinction, authentic Judaism does: since every man bears the image of God, every one is endowed with genuine freedom to choose between right and wrong—and thus to avoid sin; in actuality, however, “there is no righteous man upon the face of the earth who lives and does not sin,” and “the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth, only evil all day long (or, every day).” As Buber puts it, every person sins “not *because*, but *as*, Adam sinned.”

The emphasis upon this “inclination to evil” (*yezer hara*)—its power, its constancy, its universality and ubiquity, its insidiousness—has been very great in the Jewish tradition, even though in contemporary Jewish teaching it is often slighted and, consciously or subconsciously largely censored out. And yet, with all of its stress on the *yezer hara*, Judaism has not succumbed to despair about humanity—because it has insisted that humanity need not succumb to the *yezer hara*! Judaism has taught that the same Lord who created in man the temptation to evil has provided Israel with the antidote to that temptation: the Torah. Through the Torah the human inclination to good (*yezer hatov*) can be nourished and strengthened; through the Torah not only can a person learn the good but can be fortified to do it. The life of holiness and righteousness—good deeds performed with pure intention—although not *guaranteed* by study of Torah remains, in principle, a genuine possi-

bility. Through the Torah, which not only contains God's word but harbors God's presence and conveys God-given strength, human beings can be delivered from the power of the sinful inclination. And even when one momentarily succumbs to the *yezer hara*, he can—by availing himself of the resources available in the Torah—turn back to God in repentance (*t'shuvah*); and having truly repented, he is purified from sin and is granted atonement.

## XI

"Purification," "atonement," and "deliverance from sin" lead us to another alleged contrast between the two traditions: the contrast between faith and works. In Christianity—it is argued—the sole basis for hope, the sole key to salvation, is belief in Jesus Christ ("believe and you shall be saved"); the basis for hope in Judaism—it is argued—is the individual's own record of righteous deeds, his faithful fulfillment of God's commandments ("behave and you shall be saved"). This contrast is so widely accepted and so emphatically stated—by Jew and Christian alike—that it would seem to be undeniable; yet it actually represents a distortion of both faiths. On the one hand, Judaism does *not* teach that an individual has a right to count on God's approval and vindication simply on the basis of his own accomplishments, standing on the record of his own achievements. On the other hand, does authentic Christianity really teach—in spite of some of its extreme formulations—that an individual may count on salvation through Christ regardless of whether he *wilfully* spurns God's commandments and *regardless of whether he repents*? Indeed, not only do many Christian formulations stress human behavior as the test of true belief, but they often make clear that the very forgiveness of sins made available through the death and resurrection of Christ is intended for *repentant* sinners and is efficacious only upon their contrite acknowledgement of their sin.

## XII

But even if these alleged contrasts are seen to be grossly exaggerated and largely invalid, is it not true, nevertheless, that in their general perspectives on life and the world Judaism and Christianity are basically different? Is it not true that Judaism is this-worldly and Christianity other-worldly? Does not Judaism stress the bodily and the material, and Christianity the spiritual? Does not Judaism exalt the rational, Christianity the mystical? And don't all of these together constitute a crucial and fundamental difference?

Let it be granted that since Christians in the earliest years—as we have had occasion to note already several times—looked for an early re-appearance of Christ and the speedy establishment of the messianic

kingdom, many of the above tendencies did, indeed, characterize early Christianity. What need to be concerned for history (any more than for government), for physical well-being and economic sustenance, for marrying-and-begetting, for the problems of this world—when the end of history and the beginning of a transformed world with a transformed humanity were at hand? (A very similar spirit and outlook has characterized those occasional moments over the course of Jewish history when the coming of the messiah was believed to be imminent.) Since that early period of Christianity, however, these alleged contrasts between the two faiths are valid only in the sense that they represent slight differences in emphasis and tone—except with regard to the issue of body vs. soul and material vs. spiritual. For here it is true that Christianity has often been subject to mystical and Greek philosophical influences that have tended to denigrate, deny, and suppress the bodily, the sexual, and the material. Often, however, Christianity remained true to the Hebraic acceptance of body-and-soul—or, more correctly—to the Hebraic affirmation of the worth, unity, and potential sacredness of the whole person. (It is also true, however, that foreign influences have similarly crept into Judaism, introducing a tendency—sometimes widespread—toward asceticism, mortification of the flesh, and a sharp dichotomy between body and soul.)

As regards this-worldliness vs. other-worldliness, Judaism—though it has, as we have seen, sometimes given more attention than did Christianity to the establishment and maintenance of a just social order—has actually been as much concerned, after the Biblical period, with the world-to-come as with this world. (“This world is like a vestibule before the world-to-come; prepare yourself in the vestibule, so that you may enter the dining hall.”) And Christianity, in spite of its great concern for the “heavenly city,” has in most periods also been deeply concerned for the this-worldly condition of individuals and groups. And, more often than not, both faiths have kept both worlds within the purview of their concern, sharing the conviction that this world is crucial as the time-and-place for striving to live the life of holiness, and that the world-to-come is crucial as the time-and-place for facing the full consequences of the faithfulness and faithlessness of that striving. Both faiths have also affirmed the possibility—and have provided the “means”—of receiving at least a glimpse and foretaste, in this world and in this life, of that which in full measure is reserved for the life of the world-to-come.<sup>3</sup>

As regards “rational vs. mystical,” the situation in both faith traditions is almost identical; both include teachings and teachers that are rationalistic and others that are mystical. When they are to be counted within the mainstream of authentic Judaism and Christianity, however,

3. For a summary and interpretation of Jewish teaching on this subject, see “An Outline of Jewish Eschatology,” *JUDAISM*, 17:2 (Spring 1968).

all will be found to make—explicitly or implicitly—this three-fold affirmation: a) that human reason is one of the primary means with which God has endowed man for understanding God's teaching and design, and man's role and task in the world; b) that human reason, alone, however, can never grasp the vastness of God's creation, or the wisdom and greatness of His ways—and certainly not the profundity of His thoughts or the nature of His being; and c) that, nevertheless, God grants to man the ability to perceive—through a dimension of knowledge beyond the rational—a measure of the mystery and miracle of His creation, His revelation, and His redemption.

### XIII

Inclusion of "mystery" and "miracle" as elements common to Judaism and Christianity may come as a surprise to some, for it is often alleged that Judaism, unlike Christianity, places no great stress upon the miraculous. No one, of course, denies that accounts of miracles occur in the Hebrew Scriptures, but—it is argued—miracles play no *central* role in Judaism, and belief in them certainly does not constitute a dogma. In fact—it is claimed—Judaism has no dogmas. In one sense, this is certainly true: the denial of any particular belief, such as the belief in miracles—or even the denial of all belief—does not call into question one's status as a member of the Jewish People, as it does in the case of membership in many Christian churches. In that sense it is correct to say that Judaism, unlike Christianity, is not a dogmatic or creedal religion.<sup>4</sup> In the sense of centrality to the pattern of traditional faith, however, miracle is as important in Judaism as in Christianity! The belief in God as Creator of the universe and of man, as Redeemer of Israel, as Giver of the Torah-and-commandments—these are as pivotal, and as miraculous, in traditional Judaism, as are the Incarnation and Resurrection in Christianity. Concerning the other miracles recounted in Scripture and in the post-Biblical tradition, varying versions of Judaism (as of Christianity) accept them in varying degrees of literalness and authoritativeness; but that God is in principle *able* to perform—directly, through His own act, or indirectly, through any of His creatures (including humans)—*any* act that He *wills* (except an act involving a genuine self-contradiction) is stoutly affirmed by any authentic version of Judaism. (If He *could* not, He would not be the God of the Torah.)

But note: this means that from the point of view of Judaism even the miracles that, in the New Testament, are said to have been performed by Jesus—such as curing the "incurable," multiplying quantities of food,

---

4. For a further discussion of this issue, see "Dogmas in Judaism," in *The American Rabbi* II:7 (March 1967).

walking on water—are theoretically possible. Judaism, far from denying, must insist on affirming that God *could* perform them!

Whether God not only could but actually did bring about these particular miracles of Jesus is, of course, another question, but even to this question a believing Jew need not, on grounds of Jewish faith, necessarily answer “no.” For one thing, there are parallels to these New Testament miracles in the Hebrew Bible, where they are portrayed as brought about by God through the agency of men like Moses, Aaron, Elijah, and Elisha. Besides, there are numerous instances through the ages—and even in our own age—where events that had been totally unexpected, previously considered impossible, contrary to what were held to be the immutable “laws of nature”—have, nevertheless, actually occurred. They are perceived as miracles when the power and wisdom and love of God are seen to be at work on our behalf.<sup>5</sup> That such miracles may have been performed by Jesus *need* not be *denied* by a believing Jew.

#### XIV

But a much more fundamental issue now presents itself, one which *would* seem to constitute a crucial difference between Judaism and Christianity: the issue not of miracles performed *by* Jesus, but of miracles performed *in* Jesus; not what he is said to have done but what he is said to have been. We speak now of such central and distinctive Christian beliefs as the Virgin Birth, Incarnation, Resurrection, Christ as Savior, and the Trinity. These certainly mark the dividing line between the two faiths. To the vast majority of people—except for occasional Jewish converts to Christianity (who claim that as “Jewish—or Hebrew—Christians” they remain Jewish though having accepted Christ) and except for occasional halakhic theorists (who claim that even a Jew who has sinned through apostasy remains a Jew)—it seems self-evident that no Jew can make such basic Christian affirmations and remain a Jew.

Granted, then, that a Jew cannot affirm such miracles. But need he deny them? We ask now, concerning these miracles that are at the heart of Christian faith, the same question which we have asked twice before: does Jewish non-affirmation of their truth require affirmation of their falsehood?

As already implied in the preceding discussion of miracles alleged to have been performed *by* Jesus, a believing Jew need not necessarily deny even these miracles alleged to have been performed *in Christ*—at least in their visible, outer form. Surely the theoretical possibility that God could (if He so willed) cause conception to occur without the agency of a human male, or the dead to live again, is not a contradiction but an affirmation of Jewish faith. (Indeed, that God will, in the future,

---

5. See “Miracle and Berakhah,” in *Synagogue School*, XXII:3 (Spring 1964).



raise the dead to life is not only affirmed in several passages of the Hebrew Scriptures but in Talmudic Judaism is affirmed to be an essential "article of faith:" "He who says that the resurrection of the dead is not derived from the Torah has no share in the world-to-come!" But even the historicity of such wonders need not necessarily be denied by a believing Jew. After all, if the dead were revived in the time of Elijah and Elisha, why may the dead not have been revived in the time of Jesus?

But this, of course, misses the point of the central Christian miracles. The point is not their mere occurrence but their significance, not their outer manner but their inner meaning, not their empirical verifiability but their religious authenticity. But as soon as we speak of inner meaning and religious authenticity, we are in the realm of personal, existential appropriation: "the knowing in faith." And in this realm the whole notion of affirmation *or* denial by one person of the faith-knowledge of another is inappropriate, pointless, and even ridiculous. The question of whether "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself," whether God (The Father, First Person of the Trinity) has through Christ (His uniquely-born Son, Second Person of the Trinity)—and since Pentecost, through the Holy Spirit (Third Person of the Trinity)—provided love and forgiveness, light and truth, salvation and redemption, the key and way to eternal life—such a question is, for the Jew, not a meaningful question at all, and is, therefore, not *possible* for a Jew to answer, affirmatively *or* negatively! The most that a Jew can do—and while this "most" is less than some Christians would like, it is more than some Jews would like—is to acknowledge that in the lives of countless men and women who profess Christ the power and presence of God appear to be evident.

## XV

But doesn't the word "Christ" itself bring us to the point where a Jew must go beyond mere non-committal concerning the Christian claim? After all, since "christ" means the anointed messiah, in affirming Christ the Christian affirms that the messiah has come. The Jew, however, has a vivid picture of what the coming of the messiah entails: the end of war, poverty, suffering, sin, and death; the resurrection of the dead; the ingathering of scattered Israel to the Land of Israel and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem; the final judgment, involving reward and punishment; the inauguration of the true community of mankind, where perfect justice and love and true fellowship are an enduring reality; in a word, the establishment of the Kingdom and Kingship of God upon earth. In the face of the Christian claim that the messiah has come, must not the Jew insist that he has not?

How would Christianity respond to this challenge? Not by rejecting as incorrect or irrelevant the above Jewish description of the messianic

era, for Christianity shares the same vision. And surely not by claiming that such messianic fulfillment is manifestly here! Rather, by referring the Jewish challenger to the Christian doctrine of the Second Coming—when Christ in all his glory will, at history's culmination, return and visibly usher in that fulfillment. But if the fulfillment must wait until that Second Coming—the Jew will ask—what was the purpose and meaning of that First Coming two thousand years ago? The Christian answer is: to mediate to mankind the reality both of God's judgment and His gracious, sacrificial love; to implant in their hearts the vision of the final day; to teach them, by precept and example, how to prepare for that day and how to hasten its coming; and to provide, within believing hearts and faithful communities, a foretaste here-and-now of the love and peace that constitute the messianic reality.

## XVI

This explication of the roles of Christianity and Judaism does not, of course, alter the faith affirmations of either one. It does, however, disclose a striking parallel: not only the messianic vision, but almost all else, too, that the Christian becomes heir to through the New Covenant of Christ, and the community that professes Christ, is—as we have seen—strikingly similar to what the Jew became heir to long before, through God's original Covenant with the People Israel when they received the Torah. A host of terms are common to the two traditions, referring in the one case to Israel-and-the-Torah, and in the other case to Christ and the Church: covenant, cornerstone, the word, the way, the truth, the light, first-born son, witness, chosen one, suffering servant of the Lord, beloved one, anointed, God's dwelling place, key to life eternal. Again, even these breathtaking parallels do not, in the slightest degree, persuade the Jew to "accept Christ" nor the Christian to "surrender Christ." They can, nevertheless, remind the Christian that God's Covenant with His People Israel abides unbroken, and remind the Jew that God's Covenant promise and providence have been opened up to extend beyond the People Israel.<sup>6</sup>

Israel and the Church of Christ: how different they are in role and situation—and yet how similar in their common source, their common teaching, their common commitment, and their common goal. Until the messianic goal is achieved, they must remain separate—to some extent blind to each other's true nature and to the full measure of each other's validity. (The Christian cannot grasp the full adequacy of the Old

6. We must reserve for separate treatment two very important related questions: a) whether, in principle, there could be not only a dual form of the Covenant but multiple forms; and b) if the answer is "yes", whether—and if so, to what extent—Islam, being the only other religion that is a direct offshoot of Judaism, constitutes a valid third form.

Covenant; the Jew cannot grasp the full meaning of the New.) But together they can, and are obliged to, both work and wait for the coming of the promised messiah. (Each must be careful not to become so pre-occupied with the working as to disdain the waiting, nor to become so pre-occupied with the waiting as to shirk the working.) And together they can cherish the certainty—since each knows that the Lord has promised but one messiah—that he whose second coming is awaited by the Christian and he whose (first) coming is awaited by the Jew will be seen, when he comes, to have the same face . . .

# *Jewish Fiction in America*

RICHARD J. FEIN

THOUGH BRIEF AND PROBLEMATIC, THE FIRST significant presence of the Jew in American fiction occurs in Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale "Ethan Brand." During a strange interlude in the story, a German Jew, carrying a diorama on his back, appears on the scene. He shows to some children famous moments from history, examples of fine arts, representations of public buildings and of cities. The old man's obtrusive and hairy hand points out details on the tattered and dirty pictures. Then the itinerant Jew induces Ethan Brand to peek into the diorama and to see a vacant canvas, a blank spot which evokes in Brand his sin of intellectual pride, the subject of the story. Despite some puzzlement over this presence of the traveller who displays strange images, it is at least clear that he is Hawthorne's version of the Wandering Jew. Instead of the cross which, according to tradition, the Wandering Jew must carry until the Second Coming, this old Jew carries the diorama box in which he displays pitiable and puzzling pictures of history.

It would be too much to employ Hawthorne's curious scene as a metaphor for the Jewish writer's presence in the United States. Yet there is something in this incident from Hawthorne's romance that evokes a sense of the Jew as the strange outsider, the evoker of consternation—a familiar and perhaps overworked idea by now. Hawthorne's puzzling picture man is reminiscent of Elie Wiesel's Wandering Jew, learning languages and skills, carting his nightmares from country to country, from setting to setting, and finding no respite anywhere. The Wandering Jew has become the provocative story-teller. Hawthorne has half a grasp on this idea in his tale.

The idea of the Jew as one who is exposed, and exposes others to some persistent exilic identity while sitting in the ruins of history, is present in Hawthorne's scene. Touching upon this role of the Jewish writer in modern culture, Isaac Rosenfeld once observed that since the Jewish writer is "a member of an internationally insecure group, he has grown personally acquainted with some of the fundamental themes of insecurity that run through modern literature." (Kafka's recurrent use of the "insecurity theme" compels us to consider him the quintessential Jewish writer of this century.)

The presence of the Jewish writer in America (as well as in Europe, of course) has been similar to the role of the foreign picture-man in Hawthorne's tale as he presents to curious onlookers that tattered display

---

RICHARD J. FEIN is professor of English at SUNY, New Paltz, N.Y.

which we prefer to think of as history and culture. Like Hawthorne's Wandering Jew, the Jewish writer in this country moves in a curiously critical way between cultures. It is as if he lives and writes in the nation of which he is a citizen, yet he resides somewhere else. One feature of Jewish fiction of the modern Diaspora is that even when it partakes of the language and manners of the nation in which it is written, it is curiously transnational. In a sense, the works of Babel, Kafka, Singer and Malamud form one literature. Hawthorne's "itinerant showman" derives his role from crossing borders.

This exposure of social arrangements through the condition of exile has been one of the great, unsolicited but unavoidable themes of the modern Jewish writer in the Diaspora. It is emphasized by Alfred Kazin in his essay, "The Jew as Modern American Writer." Speculating on the impact of the contemporary Jewish writer, Kazin concludes that

it has been natural for the Jewish writer to see how superficial society can be, how pretentious, atrocious, unstable—and comic. This, in a secular age when so many people believe in nothing but society's values, is the significance to literature of the Jewish writer's being a Jew.

Exile has been the great Jewish experience. It cannot be avoided in the best works of American-Jewish literature. Indeed, it is what that literature is all about. One reason why Jewish and southern writers have been of great importance to American self-understanding in this century (as some southern literary critics have led me to see) is that both kinds of writers are concerned with the individual who feels a past which he can neither shake off nor assuredly relate to his present dilemmas and possibilities.

## II

There are three overlapping phases to American-Jewish literature. I invoke them not as absolute categories, but as critical fictions in order to talk about that literature. These are: The Immigrant Experience; Jewishness as Sensibility; and Jewishness as Specific Historicity. The titles are, admittedly, clumsy and stiffer than the actual give-and-take of any vital literature, and the categories are not mutually exclusive. One need not conclude before another begins, nor is any one writer restricted to only one of the phases.

However, we can usefully begin in the first phase with the contrast of Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912) and Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917). Whereas Mary Antin touchingly, yet uncritically, praises the rise of the Jew in America, Abraham Cahan is able to project into his novel about an unhappy dress manufacturer the themes and concerns that were to prove deeper than Antin's celebration of immigrant life. For, despite the business success that comes to David Levinsky, his longing for "something else" is to reappear in such differ-

ent works and characters as Philip Roth's "Eli, the Fanatic" and Saul Bellow's *Herzog*. It is the note to be heard again and again in American-Jewish literature. It is the search for a redemption despite a successful and affluent Diaspora, perhaps the most successful Diaspora that Jews, as a group, have ever known. And this is why, perhaps, it has become the most perplexing condition that Jews have had to face in the Diaspora. What is the relevance of the old Diaspora images to this new, obviously less severe situation in which one is a Jew? Philip Roth's characters, Eli Peck and Portnoy, represent one range of responses to this dilemma.

Mary Antin's autobiography takes the position that "It is painful to be consciously aware of two worlds. The Wandering Jew in me seeks forgetfulness." Although we should not casually dismiss the celebrating passion behind the Americanization of Mary Antin, it is that double consciousness which she hopes to avoid, that has resulted in the most important works of American-Jewish literature.

The best work of this first period (and still the best novel by any Jewish writer in America) is Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*. It is perhaps not a Jewish novel. No label will do it justice, and it has been subject to more than one. But it can be argued that the novel possesses "Jewish elements," one of which is the search by its principal character, a nine year old child, for a redemption from the diaspora of his own experience. (Henry Roth does not consider *Call It Sleep* "a Jewish novel," but one which used Jewish material as background for his own compulsions.) The child, David Schearl, longs for mastery of his own life, a mastery which leads him from that remarkable passage in Isaiah (when an angel brings hot coals to the lips of Isaiah, thereby purifying the man for the role of prophet) to the touching of the third rail of a street trolley line. From Isaiah to the power house, from that purifying coal to the potency of the third rail, is the quest of the child. Finally, it is a religious concern that dominates Roth's novel. Caught up in his own sense of sin and helplessness and fear, David longs for the state of Isaiah's purity, of undefiled energy. He seeks God and light and energy in the car track, a light he has also seen shining through a picture of Jesus and the Sacred Heart of a Christian friend. At its peak, the boy's search is inspired by a prophetic passage and that image of Jesus. He seeks redemption and mastery of his own soul within, or beyond, the diaspora of his life.<sup>1</sup>

1. One reason that we find some Jewish writers and artists fascinated by Jesus is that this fascination conveys a longing for a radical Jewish condition beyond orthodoxy, institutionality, and ritualism. This Jewish search for Jesus is the search for the Jewish figure who will, at one and the same time, confirm and redeem the Jew in the struggle of his exile. It is a theme, or concern, found in such diverse Jewish writers as Henry Roth, Alfred Kazin, Philip Roth, Michael Gold, Isaac Babel, Chaim Potok and I. B. Singer, as well as in such artists as Jacob Epstein and Marc Chagall. Most of all, the child in some of their works longs for that Jewish Jesus who, like the child, has been harried, misunderstood and mis-cast. This Jewish fascination with Jesus is an underground theme that has not yet outrun its course.



A work which serves as a bridge between the first two phases of American-Jewish literature is Alfred Kazin's memoir, *A Walker in the City*. In this autobiographical fragment, the Jewish child is something of the Wandering Jew, imbued with Whitman's encouraging injunction to take to the open road which, in this instance, means riding the subways and walking the streets of Manhattan and Brooklyn. On his way to possessing America through a prehensile intellectuality, Kazin touchingly captures the childhood and adolescent development of the American-Jewish writer. He shows how both the nineteenth century America of Emerson and Melville and the world of East-European Jewry are vivid, unrealizable, yet co-terminous pasts for a certain type of American Jew, and both will be sources for his idea of himself. Along with family carry-overs from the unseen, faraway *shtetl*, New York city nineteenth century brownstones that have survived into the next century capture the imagination of the walking child. Dusk in New York takes him back to nineteenth century America—the Civil War, Whitman, Winslow Homer. But it is also at dusk that his mother's loneliness most comes home to him—the sad beauty of her immigrant life, the marvelous shadows of Eastern European life which the boy senses. (What love and strength reside in the Jewish mothers of *The Rise of David Levinsky*, *Call It Sleep*, *A Walker in the City*, and *Herzog*, mothers for whom love and the protection of their sons have not yet soured into the post-immigrant, inhibiting, destructive role of a Mrs. Portnoy.)

Kazin movingly shows us how the Jewish intellectual's persistent quest for America is to be an act of willful imagination, a taking up of ideas as if they were physical possessions. It is the drama of one kind of outside American who conquers America through his imagination, an imagination that at the same time is haunted by his "other life" in Eastern Europe. This is a different way of possessing America than the way of the New England, Southern and black intellectuals. This is what we mean by the intellectual varieties enhanced by a real cultural pluralism—as seen in the writings of an Alfred Kazin, a Lewis Mumford, a Robert Penn Warren, or a W. E. B. Du Bois.

### III

The second phase of American-Jewish literature, what I have referred to as "Jewish Sensibility," is principally a post-World War II phenomenon, when American-Jewish literature came into its own. This phase tends to see the Jew as representative man. The Jew becomes a kind of metaphor, as Karl Shapiro put it in his preface to *Poems of a Jew*, for "man left over, after everything that can happen has happened." This kind of Jew is an offshoot of Joyce's Leopold Bloom, that key voyager of our time.

This kind of character is not ultimately a Jew because of his social situation in America (though that matters), or because he is attached to some kind of Jewish belief. Rather, what we see in this character—typified by a Moses Herzog—is a profound and comic subjectifying of a Jewish separateness which leaves him both uncomfortable with his own life yet worse off if he denies his peculiar sense of exile. This character shows us the Wandering Jew internalized. This character also tends to be in opposition to the romantic extravagances or “escapes into wilderness” or the idiosyncratic isolations so often celebrated in American literature.

This representative Jew is evident in the fiction of Bernard Malamud, the burdened investigator of life. He is also present, of course, in the novels of Saul Bellow, and there is certainly more than a touch of him in Kazin's memoir.

This Jew also conveys a deep skepticism about social arrangements and authorized truths. This kind of skepticism is delicately and wittily captured, for example, in Isaac Rosenfeld's story “King Solomon,” a well-modulated effort to reach the reality behind the myth. Rosenfeld's unkempt, undistinguished Solomon is one with the tattered images displayed by Hawthorne's Wandering Jew carrying the diorama on his back. Rosenfeld manages to pull off a tale that is charming and inquisitive, strange and realistic, homespun and shrewd. For what is the truth about this famous king who, in the story, is simply a man who plays pinocchio in his underwear and hardly strikes us as the bestower of wisdom, the maker of proverbs? What is the truth about the king? About authority? About wisdom? About the received tradition? About the stories we have heard? As Kazin speculates, it is the Jewish writer's skepticism that has been of great value.<sup>2</sup>

In this second phase of American-Jewish writing we also find a theme carried over from the first one, now more elaborate than before—that is the way the old world hangs over into the new. Ghosts of Eastern Europe haunt some of these stories, sometimes in their very images and language. (Malamud can write an English that aches to return to Yiddish.) There is a broken tie with East European Jewish life. We have already sensed it in Kazin's *A Walker in the City* which, as I said, is

---

2. Rosenfeld's story serves to remind us that in some of the best Jewish fiction of this century—whether by Elie Wiesel in French, I. B. Singer in Yiddish, Franz Kafka in German, or Bernard Malamud in English—fantasy mixes with realism. It is as if “Jewish personality” can never be understood through only a description of a given environment, the credible social context. Insight into Jewish existence is based more on secret clues imaginatively perceived than on an amassing of personal and social information. Identity, then, is strangely subjective. This is, if you will, part of the Kafka tradition, and particularly fits a Jewish writer with a sense of the Diaspora deep within him. For persistence of identity in foreign realms is the common theme among these writers.

something of a bridge between the first and second phases of American-Jewish literature. Ghost-like persons, usually in the form of displaced persons, appear in some of these stories, as in Singer's "The Cafeteria," Malamud's "The German Refugee" and Philip Roth's "Eli, the Fanatic." This is not quite the same condition as the immediately felt immigrant life of the first phase of American-Jewish literature, though it extends from that condition—the way some original immigrant suitcase is handed down from generation to generation, the more intriguing the less it can actually be used. Some of the fiction of this second phase reflects the feeling that East-European Jewish life, though dying, or dead, still makes some unresolved claim on the Jew in America. There are uncertain but deeply felt connections which persist but puzzle, demanding a response that can neither be denied nor altogether met.

One story that is an effort at myth-making in order to bridge the European and American experiences is I. B. Singer's microcosmic epic "The Little Shoemakers." In this tale of Jewish wish-fulfillment, Singer creates a situation in which the culture of the Old World is transported to and, for an idealized moment, re-experienced in the New World.

Telescoping a great deal of history, Singer describes a dynasty of shoemakers rather than a clan of rabbis or scholars. For generations in Frampol (the legendary town in Poland that is to Singer's imagination what Yoknapatawpha was to Faulkner's), the skill of shoemaking and religious belief are passed on from father to son. The story, in its way, dramatizes Kafka's observation (and perhaps it is a strange observation coming from someone like Kafka) that "Jewry is not merely a question of faith, it is above all a question of the practice of a way of life in a community conditioned by faith." In Singer's tale the family skill of shoemaking and religious faith parallel one another until the twentieth century. One by one, in this century, the sons of the Paternal Shoemaker depart for America. His wife already dead, Abba, the father, is left behind as his sons go elsewhere. Disaster appears in the new shapes of swastikas and Stuka divebombers, and a miracle is required for the old man's survival. Just as the Bible does, the author provides us with a miraculous escape. The old man finally reaches America, an America which, upon his arrival, strikes him as Egypt must have appeared to Jacob when, after crossing the desert, he arrived at the prosperous life of his son, Joseph. Despite exhaustion, family problems, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, sons, the old man mends and makes shoes, finally joined by his now merchant sons, just as they used to do in Europe. At the end of the story we are back in the "unified culture." There it exists, if you will only believe it, on the outskirts of Elizabeth, New Jersey.

But who believes?

On every level which you can imagine—culturally, physically, psychologically—the survival of the old man and the ultimate European-

American unity is unbelievable. I doubt if Singer himself believes it. But none of this matters, for we aren't supposed to believe in the cultural fusion at the end of the story; we are supposed to wish for its conclusion, just as Singer imagined the story into being. The story is fiction—fiction because the European-Jewish experience and the American-Jewish experience are not as consonant as the story pretends. But the story is also supreme fiction—because, as in a fairy tale, what our psychological and historical awareness tells us is irretrievable, the heart wishes to recover. Singer's "The Little Shoemakers" is a story of mythic amalgamations. No other Jewish story tries so much to bridge the gap between Europe and America.

But whatever the European carry-overs that Singer fictively unites with the American situation, we also know of significant differences between the Yiddish story of Eastern-Europe and the Jewish one as it is conveyed by the American writer. It is a difference that we feel in the very rhythms of the stories. You can sense it just by listening to their words. Here are the openings of three Yiddish tales: the first is by Sholem Aleichem, the second by Isaac Leib Peretz, and the third by Isaac Bashevis Singer:

"Did I hear you say absent-minded? Now in our town, that is in Kas-rilevka, we've got someone for you—do you hear what I say? His name is Sholem Shachnah, but we call him Sholem Shachnah Rattlebrain. . . ."

Here on earth the death of Bontsha the Silent made no impression at all. Ask anyone. . . .

You may not believe it but there are people in the world who were called back. I myself knew such a one, in our town of Turbin, a rich man.

The world of communal gossip has shrunk by the time of Singer but can still be felt; it lingers as something from the communal brew. It's as if these Yiddish writers had their stories passed on to them by the members of the community that they write about. Indeed, Sholom Aleichem, like Mark Twain, claimed precisely that in some of his stories.

Now listen to the opening of three American stories, the first by Bernard Malamud, the second by Philip Roth, the third by Cynthia Ozick:

Fidelman, a self-confessed failure as a painter, came to Italy to prepare a critical study of Giotto, the opening chapter of which he had carried across the ocean in a new pigskin leather briefcase, now gripped in his perspiring hand.

Leo Tzuref stepped out from back of a white column to welcome Eli Peck. Eli jumped back, surprised; then they shook hands and Tzuref gestured him into the sagging old mansion.

Edelshtein, an American for forty years, was a ravenous reader of novels by writers "of"—he said this with a snarl—"Jewish extraction." He found them puerile, vicious, pitiable, ignorant, contemptible, above all stupid.

That communal gossip found in Sholom Aleichem, Peretz and Singer are gone. In the last quotations we feel that *the writer*, contriving to get the proper grip on the material, begins the story, not the gossip. The earlier writers serve up the story, so to speak, as they inherit it from the community, as it is told to them by some "voice" from their world. The last three writers "make" the story. In one case we have the tale; in the other case the story. In one case we have the European Jew in the *shtetl*; in the other case the middleclass Jew in pluralistic America. In the first case Jacob in exile in Haran; in the second case Joseph in exile in Egypt.

There is a cultural authoritativeness in the Jewish fiction of Europe that somehow seems missing in most, if not in all, of the Jewish fiction in America, especially the fiction of the rich second phase. What we have been witnessing is not, by definition, a renaissance of Jewish literature in America, hardly a golden day of Jewish culture. What we have been witnessing in the fiction of such writers as Malamud and Bellow is the bitter-sweet memorialization of a profoundly unshaped but deeply felt Jewishness. It is a fiction of honest ignorance. By being loyal to their dim but persistent lights they shine with the underglow of their incomplete Jewish experience, incomplete memories of Europe in a nervous relationship with the American setting. They have marked out for themselves a world related to, yet also distinguishable from, the modes of Jewish-European culture and Israeli culture. A great deal of Jewish literature in America can be described by a passage from Joshua which enjoins the building, not of a real altar for actual use, but, rather, a memorial altar, a witness: "Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice; but to be a witness between us and you, and between the generations after us."

#### IV

In the third phase of American-Jewish literature, the writers evince a stronger sense of the specificities of Jewish history than in the second one. In this third phase the fictive Jew is less a representative man, or metaphor for human suffering, than he is a Jew in a specific historical or religious context who is deliberately established, even "worked-up," by the writer. Here, Jewish belief, the holocaust, orthodox inheritances, historical moments are specifically attached to the situation of the Jewish character. This phase does not include Malamud's earlier assumption (evident in *The Assistant*) that all men who suffer are Jews, but does include *The Fixer*, Malamud's indirect way of dealing with the holocaust theme in his fiction. In this novel Yakov Bok is first a Jewish prisoner in Czarist Russia; only after that situation is recognized can we consider him representative of other political prisoners of the modern era.

Some works that signal this arrival of the third phase in American-Jewish literature are Cynthia Ozick's *The Pagan Rabbi*, Edward Lewis Wallant's *The Pawnbroker*, Arthur A. Cohen's *In the Days of Simon Stern*, Robert Kotlowitz's *Somewhere Else*, and the stories of Hugh Nissenson. In these, the Jew is first set in a particular "Jewish context" and only later, if at all, can he be seen as paralleling the experiences of other men.

It is possible that this third phase represents a lowered ambition for the Jewish story in America. But, at the same time, especially in the works of Cynthia Ozick, we discover that rich particularity of cultural experience which we value in Faulkner's southern world. This phase may prove, as I think Cynthia Ozick has pointed out somewhere, of more importance to Jews themselves than the admittedly moving, but somewhat "abstracted," situation of the Jew in the fiction of Bellow and Malamud. But it is not necessary to make judgments along these lines, at least not now.

## V

American-Jewish literature in any phase does not display a strong concern for Jewish institutions or for Jewish community. Certainly it displays no quest for the Jewish God. He isn't even passionately denied. He just isn't there; pensioned off, as Isaac Babel once described Him. Rather, American-Jewish literature has come to portray that uncertain situation once described by Nathan Glazer:

If Judaism is to become in America more than a set of religious institutions supported by a variety of social pressures, it will be by virtue of examples of Jewish lives that in some way are meaningful, that in some way permit one to be a Jew.

In effect, this has been one of the imaginative tasks of Jewish fiction in America. From David Levinsky to Eli Peck, from Herzog to some of Malamud's characters, we can sense something of this struggle for the meaningful Jewish life. The most interesting lives in American-Jewish fiction are filled with curious ironies about being Jewish, uncertain about that identity which remains a puzzle, neither disappearing nor revealing itself on a level of some gratifying self-knowledge.

And doesn't this very situation explain the strange, pervasive sense of guilt felt by many characters in American-Jewish fiction: Abraham Cahan's David Levinsky, Henry Roth's David Schearl, Saul Bellow's Asa Leventhal, Delmore Schwartz's Belmont Weiss, Philip Roth's Eli Peck and Bernard Malamud's Frankie Alpine (who through his guilt *earns* his Jewishness)? What is this uneasiness, this nagging sense of betrayal that surrounds these characters but a collective, floating sense of having betrayed some vital part of themselves by being in the Diaspora? What is this uneasiness but a sense that they must change their half-Jewish



lives by shedding their Jewishness entirely or by making a new claim upon it? (This third phase of American-Jewish literature is, I think, an attempt at that new claim.) What is this unease in all these characters (and many more) but a sense that they are out of place in the Diaspora, and from that troubled sense begins their clumsy, honest sense of who they are? Not belonging is their unhappy fortune, their rich poverty. Although this, too, is only a phase of Jewish history, it is surely the overriding sense in American-Jewish literature.

The real achievement of American-Jewish literature has been the internalizing of the insecurity of the Diaspora experience. In novel after novel that insecurity of a people has been personalized, converted to a nervous psychological energy. This is what has made American-Jewish literature Jewish—not a historical or religious background fictively reproduced and in terms of which a character lives his life (as, say, in Yiddish literature). The tenor of books like *The Victim*, *The Assistant*, *A Walker in the City* has been precisely this internalizing of a people's insecurity. And this, in turn, is what has made American-Jewish literature attractive to readers, Jewish and otherwise, obsessed with keen uncertainties and unstable opportunities.

Looking at American-Jewish literature, one asks himself if some condition other than that of the stranger defines the Jew. To this puzzle-ment this literature has no positive answer other than the idea that to be a Jew (if I may alter a remark Alfred Kazin once made about the characters in the world of Sholom Aleichem), to be a Jew is to feel in one's heart an uneasy privilege, less earned or knowledgeably achieved than simply unavoidable.

# *The Americanization of Jewish Education*

WALTER I. ACKERMAN

IN A FEW YEARS FROM NOW THE AMERICAN Jewish community will have occasion to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the opening of the first Jewish school in this country. The minute-book of Congregation Shearith Israel of New York notes that

... on the 21st of Nisan, the seventh day of Pesach (1731), the day of completing the first year of the opening of the Synagogue, there was made *codez* (consecrated) the Yeshiba called Minhat Arab . . .<sup>1</sup>

That school was the harbinger of the network of Jewish educational agencies which is today an integral part of American Jewish life. It set in motion a process which will soon have completed two and a half centuries of uninterrupted educational activity. That is an impressive record by any standard—and even more so when one remembers that we are speaking of programs of education voluntarily developed and maintained by a relatively small minority group, working without the support of legal action or the benefit of governmental financial aid.

It is perhaps significant that few attempts have been made to view the growth and development of Jewish education in this country from the perspective of its interaction with particular currents in American intellectual and social history and their effect on the evolvement of the Jewish school. The standard histories of American Jewish education devote much attention and detail to administrative and organizational structure at the cost of careful examination of the peculiar tone and temper of Jewish schools in America and their relationship to specific factors in the experience of the wider community that is the United States.<sup>2</sup> One can, of course, find in these histories passing reference to some of the major components of the Jewish American experience—i.e., the successive waves of immigration and the attendant problems of dislocation and adjustment; the complications of a minority-majority relationship; the fact and fiction of the separation of Church and State; the consequences for Jewish education of a system of free and compulsory public education; the continuous upward social and economic mobility of the Jews; the shift of the centers of Jewish population from the cities to the suburbs—but one is hard put to locate a careful tracing

1. As given in A. Dushkin, *Jewish Education in New York City* (New York: Bureau of Jewish Education, 1918), p. 449.

2. A good example of this sort of history is to be found in J. Pilch, (ed.) *A History of Jewish Education in the United States* (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, 1969).

---

WALTER I. ACKERMAN is chairman of the department of education at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beer Sheva, Israel.

of these and other less obvious, perhaps, but equally influential factors, through the various levels and structures of Jewish education. It is even more difficult to discern efforts which seek to comprehend Jewish education in the light of its adoption of American conceptions of the nature and character of the child and the patterns of schooling required for life in a modern, democratic society. This is unfortunate, not only because the historical record is thereby left wanting and incomplete but, also, because we are thus deprived of a richer and deeper understanding of the patterns of teaching and learning in the Jewish school.

The picture that is generally presented is of an embattled group of a few dedicated and lonely men struggling to create a system of schooling in the face of indifference and hostility from both within and without the Jewish community. It is difficult to avoid the impression that the workings of Jewish schoolmen are conceived less as the striving towards the attainment of specific goals than as a series of stubborn retreats and determined holding actions inspired by an ideal that they know is really beyond reach. The continuous lowering of the level of academic demand and the consequent erosion of the quality of achievement which seem to characterize Jewish education in the United States are comprehended, not as the result of specific decisions of a particular time and place—decisions which actually were choices made from among a variety of alternatives—but, rather, as the inevitable outcome of the meeting and the clashing of Jewish interests and the claims of American society.

Like all reproductions of reality, the portrait here described reflects a large measure of truth. But, again, as in all reproductions of reality, there is in it no small measure of distortion. The movement away from the idea of *lamdanut* which was the hallmark of the Eastern European yeshivah had struck roots in Jewish life long before there was any significant Jewish community in America. The inroads paved on the Jewish mind by secularism were mapped without the aid of the American public school. When the *parnassim* of Congregation Shearith Israel contracted in 1762 for a teacher “. . . to keep a public school in the Hebra, to teach the Hebrew language, and translate into English, also to teach English Reading, Writing and Ciphering”<sup>3</sup> they were following a pattern of combining religious and secular studies which had a long and respectable currency among the Jews of Spain. German Jews who came to this country at a later date brought with them the knowledge of the educational practices introduced by David Friedlander and the adherents of Reform Judaism who followed in his wake.<sup>4</sup> Their sense of Amer-

3. L. Gartner, *Jewish Education in the United States: A Documentary History* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1969), p. 42.

4. M. Eliav, *Hahinukh Hayehudi B'Germania B'Yemai Hahaskalah V'Haemancipazia* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Agency, 1960).

ica served only to strengthen the view that traditional Jewish education was no longer a relevant model and that religious studies must be subordinated to the secular learning. The adoption of a catechismal mode of study in the schools which they founded here was an import from their native land that was calculated to provide a knowledge of Judaism compatible with full participation in the life of the broader society.<sup>5</sup>

It is difficult to find evidence, either in the Colonial period or in the later nineteenth century, of a uniquely American conception of Jewish education. The reasons behind the absence of such a notion are, it seems to me, fairly clear. The struggle for emancipation and equal rights, which was such a powerful factor in the development of new forms of schooling, first in Western Europe and then later in Eastern Europe, had no counterpart in the United States. The leaders of the American Jewish community of those earlier periods were, on the whole, foreign-born and without any particular expertise or sophistication in education or related disciplines. It would be asking too much to have expected them to abandon the patterns of education with which they were acquainted in their native land and to replace them with educational institutions and programs which responded to the complicated and intricate relationship between their religious traditions and the new society of which they were now a part. Nor, it seems, was there any great need or demand for them to do so. Surely, Jews who left the settled centers of Jewish life in Europe at that time to grapple with the uncertainties of existence in a still developing country could not have been terribly concerned about the Jewish education of their children. An observer from abroad quite properly described both the existing situation and the ready acceptance of its limitations among American Jews of the time (1860) when he noted that “. . . it is clear enough that men of great learning will never rise among the Jews of America.”<sup>6</sup> Isaac Mayer Wise's conviction that “. . . the education of the young is the business of the State, and the religious instruction . . . is the duty of the religious bodies”<sup>7</sup> set boundaries for Jewish education, both in form and content, which were quite acceptable to most Jews in America.

The conscious design of a program of Jewish education fitted to the fabric of American life is the product of a later period in American history. The setting and framework for it was provided by the unparalleled influx of Eastern European Jews at the end of the nineteenth century and during the first two decades of the twentieth. The specific

5. J. Petuchowski, “Manuals and Catechisms of the Jewish Religion in the Early Period of the Emancipation,” in A. Altman, (ed.) *Studies in Nineteenth Century Jewish Intellectual History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 47-64.

6. Israel Benjamin, *Three Years in America*, tr. by Charles Reznikoff (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1936), Vol. 1, p. 83.

7. Gartner, *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

occasion was the attempt to organize the New York Kehillah;<sup>8</sup> and the architects were Samson Benderly and the men who worked with him at the Bureau of Jewish Education of the Kehillah. A fortuitous combination of circumstance and personality created the conditions necessary for a conception of Jewish education different from that which had obtained until then. A series of factors were here involved in a delicate interplay: a Jewish community now large enough in both numbers and resources to support a system of Jewish education; a significant number of Jews who were deeply concerned about the Jewish education of their children; the presence of a cadre of experienced teachers and principals who had been involved in the innovative educational work of the *Heder Metukan* and the early Zionist movement in Russia; and, perhaps most important, a group of young men, either born, or largely raised, in the United States, who were prepared to train themselves for careers of professional service in Jewish education.

The work of these men, first guided and inspired by Benderly and then carried on independently, not only created an administrative and organizational foundation of Jewish education in this country, but, also, developed an intellectual and social ambience which even fifty years later remains the dominant characteristic of Jewish schools in the United States. Their plans and programs carry a distinctively American imprint; indeed, I think it fair to say that their efforts reflect a conscious attempt to meld, if not to impose, certain aspects of American life and thought with the raw material of the Jewish tradition. The temper of this effort is captured in the observation that

The American Jew has accepted both the scientific method and the modern conceptions of Democracy for his educational endeavors in this country . . . He is endeavoring to continue the best in his educational traditions with the best of modern American education . . .<sup>9</sup>

This amalgam of the Jewish and the American is more, of course, than an operational base for the development of a system of schooling; it is, in the final analysis, a prescriptive formula which seeks to define a particular kind of Jew.

The decision of the Executive Committee of the New York Kehillah in 1910 to establish a Bureau of Jewish Education in that city marked a turning point. In some circles, at least, it represented the acceptance of the idea that Jewish education was neither a matter of charity nor the private preserve of a few self appointed "authorities" best left to their own ways, but, rather, an essential service which all members of the community had the right to expect and demand—a service financed

8. A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), especially chapters 5 and 6; N. Winter, *Jewish Education in a Pluralist Society* (New York: N.Y.U. Press, 1966).

9. Dushkin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 140-41.

by the community and directed by its duly appointed representatives whose authority stemmed from their training and competencies. The Bureau was to be not just another partisan educational agency but, rather, a central communal office that would provide educational services and guidance to disparate elements of the community at the same time as it coordinated and organized activities that were beyond the power and ability of any one group to undertake and carry out.

The Third Annual Convention of the Kehillah, in 1912, strongly endorsed the principle of communal responsibility for Jewish education and defined the Bureau as an agency "above all parties in Judaism."<sup>10</sup> It was part of Benderly's special genius to realize that the fragile notion of community responsibility for Jewish education depended for its acceptance upon the translation of the concept into the language of practice. During the years of his work as director of the Bureau he gathered about him a group of young men whose talents and zeal were charged and pointed by his own charisma and dedication. The most prominent of the group—known in the folklore of Jewish education as the "BBs" (Benderly's Boys)—were Isaac Berkson, Samuel Dinin, Alexander Dushkin, Emmanuel Gamoran and Leo Honor.\*

All five of these men bear the stamp of a particular time and place. They were born around the turn of the century, the children of immigrant parents; those who were born in Eastern Europe came here early enough in life to be considered American; they were all educated in the public schools of New York City, received what may be called a "modern" Jewish education, attended City College and the then newly established Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and did graduate work at Teachers College of Columbia University. In time, each of them held key posts in the expanding network of educational activities conceived and directed by Benderly. Their later careers placed them in positions of determining influence in American Jewish education. Berkson, who ultimately became a professor of philosophy at City College, was for many years a lecturer at the Jewish Institute of Religion and influenced a generation of Reform rabbis. Dinin was the long-time Registrar of the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary and could count among his students many who were to become teachers and principals, rabbis, and professional workers in Jewish communal affairs. Following World War II he became director of the Bureau of Jewish Education in Los Angeles and was there instrumental in the founding of the University of Judaism, the West coast school of the Seminary, of which he is today a Vice President. Dushkin's work spanned Palestine, Israel and the United States. In this country, he was to become director of the Jewish Education Committee of Chi-

10. Dushkin, *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

\* Gamoran and Honor are no longer living.

cago and then of the reorganized Bureau in New York. He has only lately retired from the faculty of the Hebrew University. Gamoran was, for years, the director of the Commission on Jewish Education of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and in that capacity gave shape and form to the educational program of the Reform movement. Honor was to become director of the Board of Jewish Education in Chicago, succeeding Dushkin in that post, as well as director of the College of Jewish Studies in that city. He spent the last decade of his life as Professor of Jewish Education at Dropsie College in Philadelphia.

Of particular interest for our purposes here are the doctoral dissertations of four of the five men mentioned. As indicated above, all of them did their graduate work at Teachers College, at that time the most influential and prestigious school of education in the country. In the fifteen years between 1918 and 1933 those dissertations appeared in book form and were thus made available to a wider public.<sup>11</sup> These volumes, together with the writings of Benderly and Honor, represent the first serious attempt to develop a theory of Jewish education suited to the American scene. As such, they serve as background and guide to the work of the authors as practicing educators. Whatever the distance which separates their achievements from their aspirations, it is safe to assume that the ideas expressed in their written works were crucial in the determination of the objectives which they set for Jewish education.

It is not difficult to locate the group at specific points on the spectrum of both Jewish and American life and thought of the time—although some of them might cavil at the bifurcation seemingly implied in such a separation of the two sources of their inspiration. As Jews they identified with the Zionist idea and it was the concept of peoplehood which gave meaning to their adherence to the traditions of Judaism. As Americans the group placed itself firmly within the liberal camp of the time and many of the slogans, mottos and credos of that particular view appear and reappear in their writings. Clearly, both the Jewish and American elements in their thought and actions drew support from one another.

The task confronting Benderly and his colleagues, at least as they understood it, was to provide a justification for the continued existence of the Jews as an identifiable and functioning group in the United States, determining the means best suited to insure that existence, creating a program for the vehicle, and developing the tools whereby that program could function in effective fashion. Each step in the process meant

11. The works referred to here are: I. Berkson, *Theories of Americanization* (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1920); S. Dinin, *Judaism in a Changing Civilization* (New York: Bureau of Publications Teachers College, Columbia University, 1933); A. Dushkin, *Jewish Education in New York City* (New York: Bureau of Jewish Education, 1918); E. Gamoran, *Changing Conceptions in Jewish Education* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1924).



coming to terms with, or even opposing, some existing position or institution in either the Jewish or American community. Their moving principle, that Jews had the right, or even the obligation, to perpetuate a distinctive way of life, challenged a deeply rooted American conviction, that the best interests of both the immigrant and his new country demanded that he divest himself of all of his old customs and manners and replace them with the language, traditions, values, and hopes and aspirations of white Protestant America.

Many of the ideas which were later elaborated and refined by his younger colleagues found their first formulation in the reports on the work of the Bureau that were prepared by Benderly. He could posit the principle that Jews "are a people and have the right to exist as such" and that "Our aim . . . should be the growth and development of a normal Jewish life in harmony with modern civilization."<sup>12</sup> The instrument most capable of achieving that goal was, in his view, "a system of Hebrew schools which our children can attend after their daily attendance in the public school."<sup>13</sup> Such a system of "double education" presupposes a Judaism which is "a resultant on the one hand of all the forces that played their part in the Judaism of the past, and on the other hand of all the forces that are playing their part in the life of the modern man and woman."<sup>14</sup> It is preferable to either the parochial school or programs of religious instruction in the public school because "What we want in this country is not Jews who can successfully keep up their Jewishness in a few large ghettos, but men and women who have grown up in freedom and can assert themselves wherever they are."<sup>15</sup> These schools should be housed in safe, modern and attractive buildings; the curriculum "should be simplified and coordinated with the public school curriculum" and the material presented "so interesting and stimulating as to get the response of even tired children."<sup>16</sup> The successful implementation of this idea of Jewish education required the availability of a pool of properly trained "Hebrew teachers who devote themselves exclusively to Jewish education"<sup>17</sup> out of the knowledge that their efforts would be supported by the production of appropriate texts and other educational materials and services and rewarded by an adequate economic return.

Two aspects of Benderly's work and thought were to have especially significant consequences for the development of Jewish education in future years—his commitment to the afternoon school as the normative

12. S. Benderly, "Jewish Education in America," *Jewish Exponent*, January 17, 1908, reprinted in *Jewish Education*, 20, No. 3, (Summer, 1949): 80-86.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

institution of Jewish education in this country; and his conception of the Bureau as an instrument for the "standardization" of the work of Jewish schools.

The preference given to the afternoon school over the "parochial" school was obviously more than a matter of form alone. It was a severe circumscription of the parameters of formal Jewish education, which meant the abandonment of the ideal of the learned Jew of traditional Judaism. It would, of course, be fatuous to argue that the growth of the afternoon school was due solely to Benderly and his colleagues or that they were unaware of the lowering of the standards of learning, which was the inevitable consequence of their choice. It is reasonable, however, to suggest that while their position was derived from a considered analysis of the implications of the confrontation between Judaism and life in twentieth century America, it inadvertently gave support to those elements in the Jewish community for whom convenience was more important than ideology and who were content with something less than an intensive Jewish education for their children. The repudiation of the "parochial" school, or day school as it later came to be known, clearly offended those who sought more than the afternoon school could promise. It was, moreover, a view which extended beyond the boundaries of disinterested debate—the positions of influence in the hierarchy of Jewish education that were held by Benderly and his co-workers gave their opinions considerable weight. Intentionally or not, they provided backing for those whose opposition to the idea of the day school expressed itself in the refusal to allocate communal funds to that type of school and, thus, impeded its growth and development.

Benderly's commitment to the afternoon school stemmed from his perception of the public school as a crucial factor in American life—"the bed rock bottom upon which this country is rearing its institutions..."<sup>18</sup> His position on this issue was not, however, without its practical considerations. This is evident from a statement prepared by a group of principals whose afternoon schools were affiliated with the Central Board of Talmud Torahs, and who, under Benderly's direction, were attempting to formulate the aims, contents and methods of Jewish education. Despite its limitations, the afternoon school was desirable because it would not isolate Jewish children from their non-Jewish age-mates; it was financially within the means of the community, and would save the Jewish community from accusations of separatism and even of disloyalty to America.<sup>19</sup>

A similar concern is expressed by Dushkin when he writes, that we

18. *Bulletin No. 1* (Bureau of Jewish Education, Jewish Community of New York City), reprinted in *Jewish Education*, 20, No. 3 (Summer, 1949): 110.

19. *A Brief Survey of Thirty-one Conferences held by Talmud Torah Principals in New York City* (New York: Bureau of Jewish Education, 1912).

"must develop schools which will preserve Jewish life in this country, without interfering with America's cherished plan of a system of common schools for all the children of all the people."<sup>20</sup>

It was Berkson, however, who provided the most sophisticated theoretical justification for the afternoon school. The influence of John Dewey, his mentor at Teachers College, is easily discernible in Berkson's line of reasoning. He begins with an examination of the nature of democracy, then moves to the argument for the rightful place of minorities in a democratic state, and concludes with a consideration of the form of schooling most appropriate for the maintenance of minority cultures in such a society. A state is democratic when "... there is a progressive consideration of uniqueness, a multiplicity of diverse possibilities, a growing awareness of man's interdependence."<sup>21</sup> It follows, therefore, that the "plain role of democracy is to strive toward tolerance, to permit the minority group to be active even to the point of exasperation"<sup>22</sup> in its attempts to perpetuate the group heritage. There is, however, a sensible limit beyond which a minority group may not go because democracy also demands that

As long as the community contains a variety of forces, all of these must be permitted to play upon the child. Otherwise the child is subjected to a process which amounts to indoctrination; his horizon would be limited by a prearranged and delimited and delimiting education, that is, by an education parochial in outlook as it is in name.<sup>23</sup>

Parochial education is undemocratic because it

segregates children along lines of creed. The essential element of having the various elements of the population, during the formative period of childhood, associate with their neighbors with whom they are destined to live together as American citizens remains unfulfilled.<sup>24</sup>

A minority group which is intent on preserving its identity must "... create a school system complementary to the public schools, correlated with them and yet adequate for perpetuating the life of the community which it represents."<sup>25</sup>

20. Dushkin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 21, 137-138.

21. I. Berkson, *Theories of Americanization* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1920), p. 39.

22. Berkson, *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

25. Berkson, *Op. cit.*, p. 172. Compare the statements of Berkson with Dewey's observation that "... education consists primarily in transmission through communication. Communication is a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession... it is the office of school environment to balance the various elements in the school environment and to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born and to come in living contact with a broader environment. A democracy... is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience (J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education* [New York: The Free Press, 1966], pp. 9, 20, 87).

It is, I think, as important to attend to what Berkson is here doing as it is to understand what he is saying. He offers a definition of democracy, that is to say, of what America should be, which is to become the standard by which the behavior of Jews is to be determined and judged. Jews who reject that standard are, of course, acting contrary to the best interests of the country in which they live and, by inference, prejudice the continued existence of the group of which they are part. Judaism, the behavior of Jews, is defined, not in terms of its own normative principles, but, in no small measure, by precepts imposed from without. In pleading the case of the afternoon school in this manner Berkson is developing a principle which declares that where the interests of America and Judaism conflict—as is the case when one weighs the advantages and disadvantages of public schools and parochial schools—the interests of America must take precedence. Whatever the logic of the position, its implications are clear: the Jewish school conceived in this fashion is faced with the impossible task of transmitting a culture whose imperatives and needs are by definition subordinate to those of the larger society. Jewish education, then, is not complementary but, really, of only secondary importance.

Berkson's view of the Jewish school expanded into the idea that only the preservation of its culture could justify the continued existence of a minority group. In that process the school was the central agency, but it was part of a larger scheme which addressed itself to every age group of the community. In describing the work of the Central Jewish Institute, which he directed and which served him both as model and laboratory, Berkson notes that

It addresses itself not to child alone, nor to any one age of the population, but regards every member of the family as its patron. In fact, it looks upon the family as a whole rather than the individual as its unit of work . . . It is a Community House endeavoring to serve the neighborhood in every way it can . . . The Jewish center must carry on activities which make for the physical and social well being of the people who live in the neighborhood . . .<sup>26</sup>

The conception of the school as the focal point of a more comprehensive educational effort addressed to every age group of the community placed Berkson and his fellows well within the main stream of liberal and progressive thought and practice of the period. Progressive American educators of the time saw as their role the development of a school system capable of eliminating from American life those elements which obstructed the fulfillment of the promise inherent in the democratic ideal.<sup>27</sup> Progressive Jewish educators understood their role to be that of fashioning a school system which was capable of creating a new

26. Berkson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 181, 189.

27. R. Hofstadter, *Anti Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 363.

Jewish society, suited to the conditions of life in America. The centrality assigned to the school by both reflects the deeply held conviction that education was a major factor, indeed, the single most important one in the process of social reconstruction. The concomitant importance attributed to the child bespeaks the influence of the then burgeoning child study movement and its credo that "if society is to be remade one must above all look to the regenerative contribution the child is capable of making..."<sup>28</sup> Even if somewhat less hyperbolically, many shared Francis W. Parker's assurance that "The child . . . is the climax and culmination of all God's creation" and together with him could say "I await the regeneration of the world from the teaching of the common schools in America."<sup>29</sup>

The school as a community center—or the community center built around the activities of the school—as described by Berkson had its parallel in the "social center" movement in American education. A Wisconsin state law of 1911 had authorized school directors to establish "evening schools, vacation schools, reading rooms, library stations, debating clubs, gymnasiums, public playgrounds, public baths and similar activities." Seventeen other states had introduced such "wider use" legislation by 1914.<sup>30</sup> Drawing from the experiences of the settlement houses of the time, notably the work of Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago, local school boards began to view the school as "the wheel upon which all other activities turn" and to proclaim that "education does not consist merely of book learning." The school was to become a "neighborhood center for every sort and variety of community activity; it would be a meeting place, public forum, recreation house, civic center, home of all formal and informal education."<sup>31</sup> The school perceived in this way was the focal point of a concerted effort to Americanize the newly arrived immigrant and to improve the quality of neighborhood life.

The idea of a communal Jewish school as propounded by Berkson and his colleagues, with all of its similarities to the public school social center, implied a great deal more than is immediately apparent from a description of its activities. It is inspired by a conception that was most completely formulated in the writings of Mordecai Kaplan, which asks that Judaism be understood as more than a religious creed. The shift from the synagogue to the school as the pre-eminent focus of Jewish communal activity is both the fact and symbol of the comprehension of Judaism as a culture which embraces a broad range of views together

28. Ibid.

29. F. W. Parker, *Talks on Pedagogics* (New York, 1894), pp. 3, 450.

30. E. R. Stevens, "Social Centers, Politics and Social Efficiency in the Progressive Era," *History of Education Quarterly* (Spring 1972): 16–33.

31. L. Cremins, *The Transformation of the School* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), pp. 74–75.

with all manner of activities. For Berkson, the synagogue was too narrow a place to encompass the wide variety of activities which were a legitimate expression of Judaism.<sup>32</sup>

The dominant role assigned to the community center in the cultural life of the Jews was not without opposition from within the Jewish community. Aside from those whose religious scruples obliged them to oppose the transfer of the hegemony of the Jewish community to what was in their eyes a profanely secular institution, there were others whose reading of the American scene led them to conclusions quite different from those of Berkson and his adherents. The model of the Christian churches and the seemingly more sympathetic acceptance in America of ethnicity expressed in religious terms supported those Jews who remained committed, in theory if not always in practice, to the centrality of the synagogue in Jewish life. The efforts of those dedicated to a community theory of education, thus, ran counter to the expanding synagogue movements and the subsequent ordering of Jewish education along congregational lines. In time, the community school became, not a comprehensive institution which embraced all sectors of the Jewish community, but just another school which competed with others for its share of communal resources. The structure of Jewish education as we know it today in America, reflects, as did Berkson's proposals in his time, a particular understanding of the American ethos.

The individual school described by Berkson was only a link in the system envisioned by Benderly when he undertook the directorship of the Bureau of Jewish Education in New York. In describing its aims and activities, he asks, "How was the Bureau to make use of its funds in a way not only to bear fruit for the present, but to help lay the foundation of a stable system of Jewish education in New York City?"<sup>33</sup> The answer was that

After careful deliberation the Trustees determined to spend half of the fifty thousand dollars on the standardization of existing Talmud Torahs and the other half on new work and organization. The only question to be decided was the method of standardizing Talmud Torahs . . . The problem of standardization is twofold: Standardization aims, on the one hand, to raise the educational side of the school to a high level, and on the other hand to regulate the finances of an institution.<sup>34</sup>

In order to carry out all of the programs and activities required to achieve "standardization" the Bureau was organized into departments, each with a specific function: Finance, Investigation, Collection and Attendance, Propaganda, Standardization, New Schools, Extension Work, Preparation Schools, Teachers, and the Department of Out of Town

32. Berkson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

33. Benderly, *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

34. Ibid.

Schools.<sup>35</sup> It is clear that the Bureau and its relationship to the schools affiliated with the central office was patterned after the public school system.

Benderly's idea of a "standardized" system of schools operating "efficiently" and "economically"—the choice of his words is important—bears the imprint of a dominant motif in public education of the period. Precisely at that time, the theories and methods of "scientific management" were being hailed as the panacea for the ills of the public schools. In 1911, the Board of Education of the City of New York commissioned Paul Hanus, a leading figure in the scientific management movement, to conduct a survey of the city's schools; the 1913 Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education featured a major article on scientific management, and, in that same year, the annual conference of the National Education Association devoted a considerable portion of its deliberations to the subject.

The interest in scientific management, with its emphasis on economy and efficiency, stemmed from several factors—the emergence of the business man as a new, American hero and the accompanying aura surrounding the methods of the business world; the rising costs of maintaining a system of public education committed to serving an ever growing number of students over longer periods of time; and the heightened demands for programs of vocational education to provide "practical" job-oriented alternatives to the "impractical" traditional high school curriculum anchored in the classics.<sup>36</sup>

The gospel of efficiency decreed that the work of teachers would result in a vastly improved "product" if school administrators would but apply the principles of management already proven successful in business and industry. "A school system would remain inefficient unless it prepared a precise statement of goals, delineated the tasks it would perform, and trained supervisory personnel capable of coordinating and maintaining a high level of productivity by its workers."<sup>37</sup>

It would not be at all difficult to trace a line from the paradigm of scientific management to the scheme of organization of the Bureau as conceived by Benderly. That the ideas and principles of scientific management and their application in the field of education were more than casually known to Benderly and his colleagues and helped shape their understanding of the tasks which confronted them is evident from a statement by Dushkin which introduces his survey of Jewish education in New York City:

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 108–109.

36. R. E. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency* (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1961), especially chapter 1.

37. F. Bobbitt, "The Supervision of City Schools: Some General Principles of Management Applied to the Problems of City School Systems," *Twelfth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (Bloomington, Ill., 1913) Part 1: 7–8.



During the past two decades, the education profession has been developing a scientific technique of study . . . No longer occupied with general discussions of methods and principles, but rather with detailed and, in so far as possible, objective methods of analysis . . . *it is essential for the development of Jewish education in this country, that the method of study which has proven of so much worth in general American education be applied also to the work of the Jewish school (italics mine).*<sup>38</sup>

Scientific management was more, however, than a matter of extended form and organization alone. Coupled as it was to the concept of social efficiency, an idea rooted in the meliorism of Social Darwinism, it served as a basis for the determination of curricular content as well. Guided by the Spencerian notion that the purpose of education was the facilitation of the adjustment of human character to the ever-changing demands of daily living, curriculum experts began to look to the characteristic activities of adults, as determined by the studies and surveys of sociologists, as the criterion for the subject matter in school programs. The admission of a particular topic into the curriculum was dependent on proof of its value and worth in the day-to-day life of the society which the graduate would enter. Proponents of this view could demand that

. . . Every subject . . . present itself at the bar of competent opinion and plead for itself. One of the first questions asked will be "Does it function?" . . . Every subject is up for discussion, for examination, for acceptance or rejection.<sup>39</sup>

One can here draw an interesting progression from the proposal to adopt the community center idea to the purposes of Jewish education, through the pattern of administrative and supervisory organization suggested for Bureaus of Jewish Education, to the specific curricular programs created for the Jewish school. The thrust of this evolution is in the direction of a progressively greater impact and influence of American institutions and ideas on the process of Jewish education—from the periphery of that effort as expressed in its external forms to its core as delineated in substantive curricula. The authority of functionalism is clearly apparent when Honor says that "We must formulate a conscious aim in the teaching of Jewish history, and answer for ourselves the question 'Why do we teach this subject to our pupils?'" and, in reply to his own question, he responds ". . . we believe the teaching of Jewish history must prepare the American Jewish child for the struggle of adjustment confronting him in this country..."<sup>40</sup> Gamoran moves beyond the limits of one subject matter area and establishes the criterion of functionalism as one of the controlling ideas in the determination of all curricular content:

38. Dushkin, *Op. cit.*, 145-146.

39. W. L. Feller, "On Reconstructing the Curricula of Secondary Schools," *Educational Review* (June 1914): 46-47.

40. A. Gannes, (ed.) *Selected Writings of Leo L. Honor* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1965), p. 258.

... the criterion of functionalism ... serves not only to call attention to the extent of present usage, but by emphasizing the Jewish people as a living, changing being causes the curriculum-maker to observe carefully present-day Jewish life in order to fulfill in his curriculum present-day Jewish-needs.<sup>41</sup>

The idea of functionalism as used by Gamoran is part of a broader view, drawn from Dewey, which conceives of the aim of education as "the continuous and progressive socialization" of the child. Schooling, as a concrete embodiment of educational purposes, should concern itself with "the progressive identification of the individual's own interests with those of the group."<sup>42</sup> The aim of Jewish education, therefore, is to "socialize" the child into the Jewish people. The curriculum of the Jewish school should provide the Jewish child with the competencies, knowledge and skills necessary for him to be able "... to participate intelligently and effectively in the life of the ethnic group..."<sup>43</sup> The Jewish group, however, does not exist in isolation and its values and distinguishing characteristics are susceptible to the modifying influences of the larger society of which it is a part. The Jewish school, in consequence, is a vehicle for the

adjustment of group values to American life and to the present *zeitgeist* and curricular detail must reflect the criteria of universalization, a scientific outlook on life, a democratic outlook on life and functionalism.<sup>44</sup>

Neither Gamoran nor his colleagues were, of course, the first Jewish educators to sense that changing circumstances dictated adjustments in programs of Jewish education. Indeed, Gamoran's own sensitivity to the need for change is rooted in the precedents which he cites in his history of Jewish education. Clearly, the innovations in both the form and content of Jewish education introduced in western and eastern Europe in the nineteenth century were responses to the altered circumstances of life in that time and in those places. What does, however, distinguish

---

41. E. Gamoran, *Changing Conceptions in Jewish Education* (New York: MacMillan, 1925), Book II, pp. 91-92.

There is some irony to be found in the fact that the title of Gamoran's book was taken from the book *Changing Conceptions of Education* (Boston: Riverside Press, 1909) by Elwood Cubberly, then a dominant figure on the American educational scene. In that book, Cubberly called for the obliteration of ethnic and national differences in favor of his version of Americanization—"These southern and eastern Europeans are of a very different type from the north European who preceded them... their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civic life... Our task is to break up their groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order and popular government, and to awaken in them reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things in our national life which we as a people hold to be of abiding worth" (pp. 15-16).

42. Gamoran, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

44. *Ibid.*

them from the men whose work and thought we are dealing with here is the *systematic* attempt of the latter to understand the society around them, their search for philosophical principles which would serve as guidelines in the ongoing formation of that society, and their use of Jewish education as an instance in the application of those principles. The work of Jewish educational reformers in nineteenth century Europe was only rarely informed by the generative power of a comparable conceptual framework. The task in which our subjects were engaged was as much an analysis of America as it was an inquiry into Judaism. In determining what Jewish education should be they were also declaring what America might be.

The process I have sketched above is graphically illustrated in Dinin's published doctoral dissertation. In the preface he writes

This book is an attempt to explain coherently the current theories of Jewish survival and their implications for Jewish education, to determine which of these theories is most compatible with the democratic principles of the United States and with the historic identity of the Jewish people, and to see how the curriculum of the Jewish school and the philosophy of Jewish education may be reconstructed in the light of the demands of a democracy, a modern changing civilization, changing conceptions in religion and nationalism, and modern educational method and theory.<sup>45</sup>

True to his promise, Dinin engages in a wide-ranging description and analysis of the then current theories of Judaism and Americanism. His critique leads him to conclude that the circumstances of life in the twentieth century demand a reconstruction of the social order and the drawing up of a new conception of Judaism. The road leading to the promise of a new Judaism as part of a reconstructed society begins in the school.

Dinin draws on the theories of William H. Kilpatrick, of Teachers College, and the assumptions of the "radical" educational progressives of the time to enter an eloquent plea for a new type of Jewish school. As envisioned by Dinin, such a school would recognize the needs of the individual child and provide him with those purposeful activities which are the prerequisites of growth. Education as growth is not the mastery of subject matter "with little or no present meaning for the child" but is the development of the student's potential capacity to function actively and effectively in the reconstruction of the social order. The achievement of a new order, however, requires a vision; socialization is an empty phrase unless those responsible for the conduct of schools know "what we are going to socialize the child into." Jewish education, therefore, must "have a notion of the Jewish civilization we want to build in this country . . . We must have a notion of the type of world in which

45. S. Dinin, *Judaism in a Changing Civilization* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia Univ. 1933), p. v.

this civilization is to function, before we can begin building the new Jewish civilization.”<sup>46</sup>

The internal logic of Dinin's theoretical construct led him to develop a curriculum which was substantively different from the one proposed by Berkson and Gamoran. While all three were clearly influenced by Mordecai Kaplan and subscribed to the view of Judaism as an embractive entity responding in a variety of ways to changing circumstances, only Dinin seems to have attempted to translate that concept into the practical language of a school curriculum. The curricula suggested by Berkson and Gamoran are quite traditional in form and may best be characterized as subject-matter oriented—Hebrew, Bible, History, Customs and Ceremonies, etc.

Dinin, by contrast, attempted to relate the idea of Jewish life as an evolving process to the conception of the child as a developing organism. The curriculum is, for him, an instrument to create for the child those opportunities and experiences which make use of knowledge to develop the skills and attitudes deemed necessary for him to cope with his own development and the claims of a constantly changing environment. The stuff of which the curriculum is constructed is drawn from the culture of the Jews in all its variety and richness. The project method, which distinguishes Dinin's curricular proposals, is intended to permit the child the full play of his many interests and propensities. The process of teaching and learning is thereby transformed into a joint activity of teacher and student where the former serves as a recourse for the inquiries of the latter.<sup>47</sup>

While some Jewish schools did attempt to apply the principles proposed by Dinin in the development of their curricula, the record rather clearly shows that the more conventional models of Berkson and Gamoran were those more widely copied. Like their counterparts in public education, Jewish educators spoke more progressively than they acted.

• • •

Fifty years and more have passed since the publication of the earliest of the books we have discussed here. Much has happened to Jews and Americans since then, and the world which our authors tried to comprehend no longer exists. That fact, however, should not dim our ap-

46. Ibid., p. 199. It is instructive to compare Dinin's remarks with a statement by George S. Counts, a leading educational reformer of the time, who charged American schools with the responsibility of leading their students into a new society by providing them with an educational program which faces "squarely and courageously every social issue, come(s) to grips with life in all its stark reality, establish(es) an organic relation with the community, develop(s) a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare, fashion(s) a compelling and challenging vision of human destiny (George S. Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order* [New York, 1937]).

47. For the full description of the curricular proposals discussed here see: Berkson, pp. 195–205; Dinin, pp. 198–211; Gamoran, pp. 140–173.

preciation of what they were trying to do nor deter us from an assessment of what they achieved.

One cannot help but admire the verve and conviction which they brought to their task. Surely it was no small thing for a group of bright and talented young men to have ignored the blandishments of promising careers in any field of their choosing and to have opted, instead, for the uncertainties of the then non-existent profession of Jewish education. Much of what they believed, did and said guided two generations of their successors, and Jewish education in America today still bears the imprint of their thought and effort. It was they who, along with others, championed the cause of community education and, despite the fact that events beyond their control channeled the development of Jewish education into a different direction, their advocacy led to the acceptance of the proposition that the organized community bears a responsibility, fiscal and otherwise, for all forms of Jewish education. They were among those who forged the hallmarks of a profession—training, licensing procedures, a literature and associations of practitioners.

A careful reading of their work discloses that their passion for the Jewish people and its survival was paired with a pragmatic sense of the obdurate facts of life in modern America. Berkson, for instance, doubted that more than 10% of American-born Jewish children would ever display that particular allegiance and loyalty to the group and its mores which he considered essential for meaningful Jewish existence in a democratic society. *The sadness of realism jangles in his observation that "... the type of adjustment demanded in the democratic countries in which the Jews live provides for only a limited and doubtful perpetuation..."*<sup>48</sup>

No one, of course, can convincingly prove that education for the continued survival of a minority group can develop in a vacuum which ignores the push-and-pull of the majority culture. One can, however, question whether the assessment of the wider society and its tolerances is accurate and whether the assumptions which frame the pattern of accommodation between the two are valid. If the achievements of Jewish education in America owe much to the efforts of our company, then some of its failures and shortcomings must also be attributed to them. It is perhaps true that the sheer effort and energy required for the creation of the institutions of Jewish education in the United States leave little opportunity for a penetrating examination, or philosophical inquiry if you will, of the essential nature of the enterprise. We pay the price of that neglect, even as we attempt to refine the institutions and seek to make the machinery more efficient.

Education, in its most fundamental sense, and as differentiated

48. Berkson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.

from schooling or training, is the expression of a sensibility to a standard and represents the attempt of a society to mould the character of its members in accordance with an ideal. That ideal is not only a statement of what man ought to be, it is also the criterion which determines the materials and methods used to make him that way.

I would suggest that Jewish education, except in Orthodox quarters, both in the period we have been discussing and in our own time, has not been informed by such an ideal. One can argue with some cogency, I believe, that, until such an ideal is articulated, efforts at the "improvement" of Jewish education will remain little more than patchwork mechanics which only fall short of any serious mark. Jewish education as conceived of by those whose work we have been discussing here is a means for the survival of the Jewish people. With all of its legitimacy as a guiding principle, the idea of survival is not a sufficiently fundamental or basic idea on which to build a program of education. It has led to a situation in which the goals and methods of Jewish education are more determined by the passing fads and fancies of American life than by a clearly accented standard rooted in Jewish culture and its traditions. The determination of ends and means is imposed from without, a process which thwarts organic growth from within the culture.

When Berkson writes that "the central idea in Jewish life is Torah" one anticipates a statement flowing from the observation which addresses itself to the question of man's nature and the purpose of his life as a Jew. In its stead, Torah is defined as

a word of many connotations ranging from the usual designation of the Pentateuch to the whole spiritual life . . . it is Jewishness, the spiritual life and Godliness . . . The idea of Torah has been broadened to include cultural and aesthetic values as well as those which popular usage identifies as religious.<sup>49</sup>

That, of course, is a definition so broad as to make impossible the derivation of any principle of selection or discipline.

A similar criticism may be directed against Gamoran's criteria for the determination of curricular content. Beginning with the observation that the aim of Jewish education is "continuous socialization" and that "this socialization implies the preservation of the group,"<sup>50</sup> he concludes that the curriculum should stress the group values which will contribute to the achievement of that goal. Those values, however, must be adjusted to "American life and the present Zeitgeist" if the aim of group survival is to be fulfilled. The *paideia* of the Jews in America is, thus, by definition formed by forces totally extrinsic to the culture from which it ought to grow.

49. Berkson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 100-101.

50. Gamoran, *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

The attitudes of Benderly and company, as well as those of their successors, toward the child and the day school, are illustrative of the consequences of the assumptions outlined above. The significance attributed to childhood and the high hopes pinned to the work of the elementary school, a position directly drawn from American life as I have tried to show, is a significant turning point in the history of Jewish education. Despite the romanticization of the *heder*, the fact is that, historically, the center of gravity in Jewish education was the yeshivah, the school of higher learning. The focusing of the educational efforts of the Jewish community on the child and the elementary school resulted in an unconscionable neglect of other sectors of the population, and was a denigration of the intellectual effort and capability required for a true understanding of Judaism. The word is the major art form of Judaism; its proper appreciation is vouchsafed only to those who have reached a certain level of intellectual maturity.

The opposition to the day school was born of a similar bending under the weight of American life. The pressure from without was able to impress itself because it met no counterforce in a definitive standard drawn from Judaism. Given the significance of knowledge in the Jewish scheme of things it is difficult to understand the alacrity with which American Jewish educators accepted as normative the supplementary school and its insuperable limitations. The theoretical justification offered in support of that type of school and its implications for practice and procedure forms the line of separation between Jewish modernists and those Jewish educators who, like their Catholic counterparts, were unwilling to subvert the imperatives of their tradition by appeal to the demands of political theory or the implication of sociological fad.

\* \* \*

The relationship of Jews to America is an ongoing process whose configurations assume a bewildering variety of forms. I have tried here to describe and analyze some aspects of that interaction and their consequences for Jewish education. The picture is, of course, far from complete but I hope that it will contribute to that understanding of the past which is a precondition for dealing with the problems of the present.



# *Reconstructionism: Hokhmah as an Ethical Principle*

BARBARA ANN SWYHART

. . . The spiritual life of the Jew consists in doing whatever he can to express himself as a Jew creating—through association with a homeland, communal organization, language, literature, art, ethics and religion. These phases of Jewish life are to be treated as interdependent and contingent upon each other. *It compels the Jew to see Judaism steadily, organically and whole.* (Italics mine.)

M. M. Kaplan, *Journal IV*, June 15, 1928

## *Reconstructionism and Hokhmah (Wisdom)*

IN 1934 MORDECAI M. KAPLAN BEGAN TO WRITE his philosophy for the reconstruction of American-Jewish life. He was convinced that the American Jewish experience is a process of evolutionary growth in "wisdom," traditionally referred to as "religion," a process which challenges the function of religion in the light of America's quality as a democracy. For Kaplan, the problematic of American-Jewish religion lies in the meaning of Jewish peoplehood, and the ideology which grounds its meaning and purpose. Jewish pride manifests itself in the evolving peoplehood of the Jews. Kaplan's early professional life in America—before the publication of *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934)—reveals a reflective thinker in the crisis of a renewed religious consciousness. His thoughts reflect the wisdom which he was later to set down as part of the Jewish heritage, and the product of this wisdom is the philosophy of Reconstructionism and of the Reconstructionist Movement. Kaplan made religious experience meaningful as an ethical reshaping of American-Jewish experience.

This new ethical reshaping or "revaluation" (a term taken from the work of John Dewey) may be described as *hokhmah* or wisdom. In very boldly rejecting any form of supernaturalism which places God beyond the reach of man, Kaplan also rejects the attempts to reinterpret revelation by allegorical or analogical methods. Supernaturalism fails to recognize the cultural needs of a civilization. The God idea should be understood in relationship to an environment—to a civilization—the constituents of which, such as language, personalities, and epoch-making events, function collectively for a people.

The God idea thus functions to convert what might otherwise have remained an idle fancy into a prophetic vision that assigns objectives to collective effort . . . The sum of all these ways in which the God idea

---

BARBARA ANN SWYHART is assistant professor in religious studies at San Diego State University.

functions pragmatically in the civilization of a people is what we mean by its religion.<sup>1</sup>

Kaplan discerns within his own vibrant Jewish history a processive unfolding of a civilization which is marked by a Power, or quality, which he calls "God." "We must be able to state definitely what experiences or phenomena we are prepared to identify as manifestations of God and why we identify them as such."<sup>2</sup> This is the function of the process of wisdom—i.e., of the process of ascertaining what is valuable in life for the American Jew.

Kaplan's primary concern is an organic Jewish civilization which is a flexible, and at the same time, solid advance of Judaism in time and space.

To the modern man, religion can no longer be a matter of entering into relationship with the supernatural. The only kind of religion that can help him live and get the most out of life will be the one which will teach him to identify as divine or holy whatever in human nature or in the world about him enhances human life.<sup>3</sup>

Religion, then, is intimately tied to an organic naturalism in which, not belief in God, but *mature wisdom* functions as the frame of reference for a people seeking meaningful existence. Through the experience of the problematic development of Judaism in America, Kaplan began to conceptualize his reconstruction of the aspects of Jewish life which ultimately evolved into his philosophy of mature wisdom.

The ideas of Reconstructionism represent a Jewish method for the advancement of the conceptual and practical knowledge of those values which constitute the apex of the art of living. Contrary to the thesis of Charles Liebman, a political scientist, that Reconstructionism has become an intellectual movement rather than a practical organizational unit, in need of "theological virtue,"<sup>4</sup> Reconstructionism is a method precisely dedicated to elevating what is valuable in life to the level of ultimate importance. But, first, man must explore the reality which he is to esteem. He must become aware of the process of knowledge in which he participates. As part of a social unit, man must realize the workings of his culture and, when needed, reconstruct its trends and tendencies to give it a new direction and a new impetus. Intrinsic standards are not to be had as a possession—whether in a human being or in a society. If they exist at all they are to be discovered in the ever-changing reality of this world.

Early in his career, Kaplan had delineated the poles of Judaism as

1. Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, (N.Y.: Reconstructionist Press, 1937; 4th printing 1962), p. 19.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

4. Cf. Charles S. Liebman, "Reconstructionism in American Jewish Life," *AJVB*, 5730: 3-99.

a social mind, meaning: (A) its *collective* nature, and, (B) its individual contribution to the knowledge of social religion through its participation in universally accepted principles of experience.<sup>5</sup> Kaplan asserted: (1) that religion is not essentially a means of individual salvation; (2) that every existing religion is the collective consciousness of its adherents.

### *Organic Community and the Bible*

In outlining Judaism as a civilization, Kaplan describes the constituent elements of that civilization. Without a specific content civilization is an abstract term.

The term "civilization" is usually applied to the accumulation of knowledge, skills, tools, arts, literatures, laws, religions and philosophies which stands between man and external nature and which serves as a bulwark against the hostility of forces that would otherwise destroy him.<sup>6</sup>

Applied to Jewish civilization this means a rediscovery of the organic aspect of its life. To state the precise meaning of *organic community* is difficult. In view of all that has been said, I must rely on Kaplan's own words in a note to me:

For a community to be organic like a physical organism implies an overall body in which all the institutions are mutually integrated . . . As a matter of fact we are at present so far from being an organic community that many steps have to be taken in the general structure of the Jewish people before we can deal with the details of communal organization. What you ascribe to Eugene Kohn is about as far as we have gotten in the theory on organization of the American Jewish community.<sup>7</sup>

Since Kaplan refers to Eugene Kohn, I would like to repeat the latter's description of organic community. For Kohn, a religious humanist of the Reconstructionist Movement, the democratic process itself, conceived as a derivation of authority from the consent of the governed, is the assertion of God's sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> Following Kaplan's thought very closely, Kohn expands his understanding of the nature of the democratic Jewish community in the light of four fundamental principles: inclusiveness, voluntarism, constitutionalism and federation.<sup>9</sup> He sees the necessity for intuition, logic and experience as the method for the valuation of the demands of the people in a particular, localized community. This organic quality establishes for the Jews a sense of human worth and a feeling of self-esteem—to Kaplan the essence of the health or salvation

5. M. M. Kaplan, "How May Judaism be Saved," *The Menorah Journal*, II, #1, (Feb. 1916): 41.

6. Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life*, (N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1967) [first pub. 1934, The Macmillan Co.], p. 179.

7. From letter and notes written to me, May 4, 1969.

8. Cf. Eugene Kohn, *Religious Humanism: A Jewish Interpretation* (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1953), p. 67.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

of the society.<sup>10</sup> Organicism in a pluralistic civilization demands that an ethical principle, rather than doctrinal formulations, direct the pluralities to achieve harmony. The principle states that we should "conduct ourselves in all . . . relationships as to evoke the best in those with whom we interact."<sup>11</sup> This ethical principle takes into account the diversities of human existence, the world of two civilizations, and transcends any individualistic approach to Judaism. Acknowledging American cultural pluralism and the values of voluntarism and freedom for the individual as well as for the collectivity, Kaplan discusses a social philosophy based on the organicistic world view with an emphasis on the ethical. The ethical aspect of the society equals the soterical (salvific) value of the vital thrusts which enable a society to survive. The particular contents for survival vary within each civilization. Thus, Judaism as a civilization would possess its unique content in the area of folkways, laws, heritage, art, literature, in a word—peoplehood.

### *Reshaping The Covenant Principle*

The content of Jewish civilization combines the past and the present in a renewed covenantal principle. In the covenant relationship, what image of God does Kaplan follow? What historical perspective does he imply regarding the Scriptures? In response to the latter question, he states:

The Bible should be read as the first, and so far, the only authentic expression of a national conscience. . . .

How our ancestors pictured God is immaterial. What is important is that the laws they ascribed to Him may be summed up in the modern term: ethical nationhood. The ritual laws helped to foster the collective self-awareness as a people; the moral laws helped to render that self-awareness ethical. Instead of discussing in detail the idea of God, or the functioning of the moral laws, the rest of the Torah and the rest of the Bible discuss in detail the frustrations experienced by the Household of Israel because of their failure to be loyal to God or to obey His commands.

Or as we might put it, the frustrations of the Jewish People due to their failure to live up to the dictates of conscience as spelled out by the prophets, psalmists and sages.<sup>12</sup>

This approach to Biblical history is a form of socio-psychohistory which attempts to view the ongoing relation of a collectivity to the ideals evolving in its development as a nation. The totality of Jewish organic, socio-psychohistory has a divine character. God is the "power that makes for

10. Kaplan, *Judaism in Transition* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, Inc., 1936), p. 25; cf. pp. 65 ff.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 32. Kaplan could not limit himself to a social idealism based only on the improvement of political and economic activity. Humanization (p. 47) and loyalty (Josiah Royce's concept) to humanity, as well as the goal of self-realization, are Kaplan's major emphases.

12. Kaplan, "How to Read the Bible," unpublished notes found in his library.

salvation." God is the dynamic which moves the whole process, and this total process is the way of salvation. Thus, it is most important to remember that the image of the concretization of God and man in relationship attributed to "the covenant" must be clear. Several possibilities flow from precisely this image. For example, the social emphasis in discussing an image of God results in a more flexible ethical theory and a more humanitarian concern. The line of concern is horizontal and not vertical but becomes vertical in its transcendence of the moment as a project into the future of a nation or collectivity. The result of this evolutionary approach is an emphasis on peoplehood in an evolving civilization. The Bible is a source of the consciousness as well as the conscience of the people. Each event is important not only as a momentary event, but as a project into the future, subject to the changing thought patterns of each age and each culture. Socio-psychohistory is the revelation of traditional concepts and structures. It is this process by which Kaplan fortified his justification for Judaism as an evolving religious civilization.<sup>13</sup>

Kaplan searched for a concept of the covenant that would function as the ancient faith in God's covenant with Israel functioned for his Biblical forebears. The emphasis was on the operability of the covenant, not on its form. Finding the traditional covenant idea inadequate, Kaplan proposes:

The idea of covenantship can be interpreted in terms that will enable it to satisfy the need of the Jewish people for faith in its future, if we focus our interest not on the specific ideas implied in the covenant as it was understood by tradition, but rather on the experiences that gave use to these ideas. If the Jew saw in the Sabbath, and in those Jewish ideals of which the observance of the Sabbath made him aware, evidence that God had singled out the Jewish people for salvation, it was because of the joy that he experienced in pursuing those ideals.<sup>14</sup>

The covenant idea goes even further because it symbolizes God as the Life of the universe, "the Power that evokes personality in men and nations." Kaplan adds that, ". . . *the sense of the nation's responsibility for contributing creatively to human welfare and progress in the light of its own best experience becomes the modern equivalent of the covenant*

13. Cf. Kaplan, "What is Judaism," *The Menorah Journal* I, 5 (December 1915): 309-318, in which he rejects the purely historic method and supplements this method with an understanding of the social and psychical forces in Judaism. Cf. "Judaism and Christianity," *The Menorah Journal* II, 2 (April, 1916): 106. "That every existing religion is the collective consciousness of its adherents." Also, in *Higher Jewish Education and The Future of the American Jew* (Los Angeles: University of Judaism Press, 1963) "Jewish peoplehood is not a political concept although it calls for a specific type of policy. It is the collective analogue of personality as applied to the individual. It is therefore a moral and spiritual concept" (p. 30).

14. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1937, 4th printing 1962), p. 95. The Sabbath becomes the symbol of this covenant as the Kiddush is a symbol of the exodus from Egypt; cf. pp. 90-91.

*idea.*"<sup>15</sup> The discovery of the possibilities and limitations of life demands the collective effort of a people involved in life and the transcendence of these immediate realizations to the future project of the collectivity. This is the transcendent, organic naturalism of the cultural life of a people. It is salvific in that the process itself reveals a God who is "the power that makes for salvation."<sup>16</sup> Simply stated, in place of a super-naturalistic goal Kaplan explains salvation as a process which "is the maximum, harmonious functioning of a person's physical, mental, social, moral, and spiritual power." For the Jew this self-consciousness is centered in the knowledge of his origin. Nationhood—ethical nationhood—is the "content of which Reconstructionism is made." Salvation is achieved through a self-conscious awareness of "peoplehood," a community in which the potential for salvation is created in mutual cooperation. For the Jew living in two civilizations, that of America and that of Judaism, this concept is necessary for the maintenance of the common ground of Jewish origin. In this reconciliation of two civilizations, the concept of ethical nationhood serves a religious function.<sup>17</sup> This religious function is coupled with adherence to the value of civic loyalty. Just as the Christian can serve two traditions, the Jew can also serve both the American and the Jewish way of life. In fact, Kaplan states that, "the vicissitudes of history have brought it about that the *average human being has to draw upon two civilizations to obtain all those values which he requires for his self-realization as a human being.*"<sup>18</sup> All of nature, all of experience is interrelated. An interlocking reciprocity of all elements—physical, biological, psychical and divine—is the objective fact of what men value. Value is the subjective element of authentic religious experience. Both elements constitute wisdom. Wisdom is the characteristic name for the authentic religion. That is, it is "a system or pattern of values which constitutes the spiritual currency of an organic society of mutually responsible human beings."<sup>19</sup>

### *Evil*

Kaplan's evaluation of the idea of evil follows a similar pragmatic approach. As early as 1931, he considered evil to be an interference in life rather than a fateful necessity. All manner of evil becomes a test for man. "The test consists in retaining faith and patience in the face

15. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

16. Cf. Chapter I of *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, pp. 40–103. Also in Kaplan, "When is Religion Authentic," *Reconstructionist* XXX, 2 (October 2, 1964): 17.

17. Kaplan, *The Future of the American Jew* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1967). See pp. 89–93, "The Significance of Being a People."

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

19. Kaplan, "Jewish Religion as Wisdom," Part I, *Reconstructionist*, XXXIII, 18 (January 12, 1968): 12; cf. p. 10.

of retardation of that blessing which we have a right to expect with the gift of life."<sup>20</sup> Evil is part of the existential challenge to man which calls him to respond in an attitude of "hopeful waiting." Even in the wake of the horror of Auschwitz and Dachau, Kaplan envisions the future hope of the Jewish people. Because God is conceived of as a functional quality, and not as an entity, Kaplan does not wrestle with the creation of evil but, rather, with evil as a fact to be disvalued by elimination and/or transcendence. Evil is chaos that has not yet become a plus value in the cosmos. The salvific activity of man must be the source of actualizing God as the "Creative Power of the Universe." This power is the antithesis of chaos,

by impelling us to transform it, whenever it takes the form of pain, suffering, cruelty or injustice. This fact concerning God we actually experience whenever we feel impelled to act creatively or ethically, that is, to remove or transform evil, instead of resigning it to ourselves.<sup>21</sup>

Salvation, concerned as "an objective of human action, not as a psychic compensation for human suffering"<sup>22</sup> eliminates a passive reaction to evil and reinstates a positive response to the personal, physical, psychical and social ills that exist for men.

### *Creativity and Moral Responsibility*

Creativity is the positive force that manifests itself in three physical dimensions "which take on a moral character when they attain consciousness in the human being." These dimensions are: (1) human moral responsibility; (2) the uniformity of the cosmos, "with its coherence and consistency, which integrates the vast complex of the physical content of space into one universe," and which takes the form of two corollaries in human life—integrity and intelligence; (3) cosmic organicity which takes the form, in human life, of the interaction among the members of a social organism.<sup>23</sup> In everyday life, this cosmic force takes the form of man's moral responsibility.

This responsibility involves both freedom to choose among alternatives (limited by our condition) and a response to the human family of which man is a part. It extends from the past into the future and establishes the continuum of life. In effect, the evolution of life is the enactment of judgment through moral action. Kaplan supplies a reinstated *logos* of evolution, which appears to be the consistency or coherence

20. Kaplan, "Election versus Job: Two Interpretations of Life," *Opinion* (A Journal of Jewish Life and Letters) I (December 21, 1931): 7. Cf. *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, pp. 64-67.

21. Kaplan, "Dialogue on Reconstructionism," *Reconstructionist* XXIX, #19 (January 24, 1964): 14-15.

22. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, p. 54.

23. Cf. Kaplan, "The Unsolved Problem of Evil" *Reconstructionist* XXIX, 8 (May 31, 1963): 13-15.



that compels each atom, molecule, body, or organic group of bodies in relation to its environment to act consistently or coherently with its intrinsic character. Again, this consistency is reflected in man's control over his lifestyle and in the direction that his life assumes. For this reason Kaplan chose Hillel's dictum, for the representation of this moral responsibility in action represents both man's relationship with himself and with others:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And being only for myself, what am I? And if not now—when?

Moral responsibility, then, assumes a transcendent, or divine, quality, for conscience represents a cosmic activity as well as an individual response. An authentic human being is a self-conscious responsible being. This response has a most basic power at its motivation, i.e., "the need to be needed," on an individual level or the will-to-live on a civilizational level. This reality is the core of individual and group sustenance. With this admission, Kaplan has crossed denominational boundaries. He has merged religion and ethics, religion and psychology, religion and modern world problems. Moral responsibility can begin only when men realize that they need each other.

If, (says Kaplan), . . . we wish religion to assign a position of primacy to ethical behavior we have to view all human behavior in the spirit of moral responsibility as an indispensable condition to salvation, or human fulfillment. Secondly, we have to realize that moral responsibility is not a social convention. It is the human manifestation of the overall creative process in nature. The name for that overall creative process, as a correlate of salvation, is divinity, or God.<sup>24</sup>

Moral activity in a spirit of concern functions through what W. Gunther Plaut has called "neo-biblical man" who "*struggles to maintain his hard-won individual selfness and must now attempt to reacquire compatible group values as an essential part of his being.*"<sup>25</sup> All of the specifically theological or biblical concepts must be reconstructed in the light of neo-biblical man who stands in a bipolar world of "self and other." Repentance, for example, stands for "nothing less than the continual re-making of human nature."<sup>26</sup> God must be envisioned as the sum of the forces that contribute to the formation of conscience. Neo-biblical man

24. Kaplan, "When Is Religion Authentic," *Reconstructionist*, XXX, 11, (Oct. 2, 1964): 15-16.

25. W. Gunther Plaut, "Toward a Higher Morality," *Reconstructionist*, XXIX, 2 (March 8, 1963): 8.

26. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, p. 178. Cf. pp. 178-187. In this section Kaplan indicates three types of failure which repentance should aim to remedy: (1) "the failure to integrate our impulses, habits, social activities and institutions in harmony with those ethical ideals that make God manifest in the world" (p. 182); (2) "the failure to keep on growing in character" (p. 183); (3) "the failure to realize to the fullest degree the potentialities inherent in our natures and in the situations in which we find ourselves" (p. 184).

must, therefore, be re-educated to the organicity of his universe. This includes the self-concept (selfhood) primarily and, consequently, the God concept (Godhood). For when we speak of any concept in Kaplan's philosophy we are immediately speaking of them all. Selfhood as "an ongoing process which the individual experiences as a result of his attempting to integrate his biological, psycho-social and spiritual needs,"<sup>27</sup> and the "cosmic process of organicity" as the source of the superpersonal force in man (Godhood)<sup>28</sup> form the poles between which man experiences, makes decisions, lives and dies in a spirit of wisdom. *But*, man must, and does, operate from this standpoint in a social group.

Insofar as no individual human being can possibly activate his human potential without interacting with the organic group to which he belongs, loyalty or love is a prerequisite to his self-fulfillment or salvation. That interrelation between oneself and the world is the source of the authentic feeling which confers the existentiality without which all else seems merely ideational. That is the reason that the Jew cannot have a Jewish consciousness apart from identification with the Jewish people nor can a Christian have a Christian consciousness apart from identification with the church.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, intergroup activities and ethical concerns must transcend any individualistic or particularistic approach to the common problems of all groups. A common universe of discourse must be the platform of organicity, beginning with reeducation in a democratic or pluralistic lifestyle.

### *Authentic Wisdom*

Wisdom (*hokhmah*), not religion, "is the sense of values in their normative hierarchy."<sup>30</sup> Wisdom is constituted, by insight, into the use of the concepts (values) which each group, nation or church must recognize as basic to its organization and particular program for life.

In group religion, *wisdom*, or the sense of values, functions as a means of enabling human beings to appreciate why what God does for them is so *important* as to be indispensable. The real problem of religion is not how to prove the existence of God but how to make sure that human beings, both individually and collectively, are being impelled and helped in their efforts to achieve what is most important to them—salvation or self-fulfillment.<sup>31</sup>

This sense, or wisdom, is made up of thought, emotions and volitions which, within the tension of life, are sustained by the functional meaning of God. Wisdom is also a process of interrelating the activity of being

27. Kaplan, *The Religion of Ethical Nationhood: Judaism's Contribution to World Peace*, (N.Y.: The Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 79. Cf. Kaplan, "The Unsolved Problem of Evil" *Reconstructionist*, XXIX, 8 (May 31, 1963): 14.

28. *The Religion of Ethical Nationhood*, p. 79; cf. p. 80.

29. Kaplan, "The Unsolved Problem of Evil," pp. 14–15.

30. *The Religion of Ethical Nationhood*, p. 17.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

human and a cultural perspective. In this process we must be concerned, not with what man means to God, but rather with what God means to man. This implies a knowledge of man's needs, his actions and reactions and, finally, faith in his *responses of value*, or his moral responsibility of men and nations through commitment to *ethical nationhood*. God is a value of supreme importance and Godhood is "that . . . which directs the interplay of individuality and interactivity in man."<sup>32</sup> The realization of this sense of value and polarity is wisdom. The belief that man can come to this awareness is faith, faith in the soul as "the creative plus" in man. Transcending this faith is the realization that value or, self-consciousness manifested in priorities, is more than the factors involved in the process of wisdom. Kaplan's concern with education and depth psychology moves in the direction of the transcendence of the individual, his inhibitions and drives to the release of creative forces within the group. As one who sees the "wisdom" of that which a vital Judaism can offer, not only to Jewish but also to cross-religious concerns, Kaplan is the restless adventurer of whom it might be said:

Under the shape of his sail, Ulysses,  
 Symbol of the seeker, crossing by night  
 The giant sea, read his own mind.  
 He said, "As I know, I am and have  
 the right to be."

from "The Sail of Ulysses"  
 by Wallace Stevens

---

32. Ibid., p. 93.

# *The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea*

ARTHUR GREEN

MODERN JEWISH THINKING ABOUT GOD HAS LONG suffered from a striking lack of poetic and symbolic imagination. Rooted in the world of German post-Idealism, our theologians chose to write in the language of abstraction, and thus produced little which reached into the depths of man's religious consciousness, a consciousness which is more easily aroused (if all the studies on pre-modern religion are to be believed) by myth and symbol than by the antiseptic niceties of philosophical theology.

When modern Jewish scholars and theologians did turn to models from the Jewish past, it was most frequently in Maimonides that they found what they had sought. Here was an intellectual elitist in their own image, towering far above all the vulgarisms of popular piety, and committed to an idea of God which, for abstraction, could easily vie with their own. If one views the amount of attention to Maimonides and the entire Medieval school that was given by late nineteenth and early twentieth century Jewish scholarship, as reflected in writing as well as in curricula of Jewish studies at seminaries and universities, it becomes clear that the great model of Jewish thought for those generations was the Medieval philosophical sage, one who spent much of his life in explaining away those very metaphors and symbols for the divine which earlier men of piety, the Biblical and particularly the Aggadic authors, had created.

The existentialist trend in modern Jewish theology has offered but a partial solution to the problem. True, Buber's rediscovery of Hasidism and Rosenzweig's turn to Halevi both represented a search for alternative spiritual ancestors of a more poetic variety. Nevertheless, the language in which these and others who followed them chose to express their own thoughts continued to be one of abstraction; concreteness and unabashed anthropomorphism in religious writing were still the domain of poets, not of theologians. One need only to contrast the Yiddish poetry of such figures as A. J. Heschel and Aaron Zeitlin with the theological writings of their Germanophone and Anglophone contemporaries to perceive the ongoing bifurcation of religious language and religious thought in the modern Jewish consciousness.

The great task of Jewish theology today is the recovery of an authentic Jewish religious language. The dramatic and frightening events

---

ARTHUR GREEN is assistant professor in the religious thought department at the University of Pennsylvania.

of recent Jewish history have lent to the theological enterprise a new and desperate seriousness, revealing a depth of longing which can no longer be sated by the language of abstraction. Our search for authentic religious voices draws us to the writings of Isaac Bashevis Singer and Elie Wiesel; only there do we find a spiritual texture sufficiently rich to encompass our grief and anger, while finding some room (at least in Wiesel) for the exultation of personal and national rebirth. The turn of such a figure as Emil Fackenheim to the search for a new Midrash, and perhaps, above all, the work of Gershom Scholem and his followers in making available to us the great wellsprings of Jewish mystical literature, are guideposts toward the old/new avenues which Jewish religious thought must explore in our age.

It is in this spirit that the present literary/historical study is offered. It is hoped that the rediscovery of this and other long-neglected aspects of Jewish religious language will serve to enrich the discussion of theological matters in contemporary Jewish circles. The new Midrash, while taking its own directions, will become an authentic Jewish voice only insofar as it is nurtured by the old. As is the way of Midrash, the reader is left to draw his own conclusions from the complex of images here presented.

\* \* \*

Classical Jewish literature may be said to be marked by two opposing tendencies with regard to the question of physical anthropomorphism. Well-known is that strain, running through certain Rabbinic texts,<sup>1</sup> the Targumim, and culminating in the classics of medieval Jewish philosophy, which seeks to deny the attribution of any bodily characteristics to the Creator or, at the very least, to deny the possibility that human beings may "see" any physical representation of God during their lifetimes. Beginning with Alexandria,<sup>2</sup> much of Jewish theology has accepted as an essential part of its task the re-reading of seemingly anthropomorphic passages in the Bible, and, by means of various literary devices or quasi-philosophical machinations, to explain away those claims which seem to run counter to the assumption that God is not possessed of a body and cannot be seen by the human eye.<sup>3</sup>

1. Cf., for example, *Yevamot* 49b, where Isaiah is said to have been sentenced to death for having claimed that he saw God, and *Sifrei* Numbers 103 (ed. Friedmann 27b), where it is made clear that Moses himself attained no more than a "vision of the Word" (*mar'eh dibbur*).

2. Rabbinic and Hellenistic sources are quoted in Wolfson's *Philo* (Cambridge, 1947), v. 1, p. 116 and v. 2 p. 97f. and p. 127ff. Wolfson claims that Palestinian Judaism contained within it a native discomfort with anthropomorphism, which is not necessarily to be traced to Hellenistic influences through Philo.

3. Of course, from a rigorous philosophical point of view, these are two separate problems. It is perfectly conceivable that God is, indeed, possessed of bodily attri-

Surely less well-known is the opposing strain, one that is nonetheless equally representative of a major portion of Jewish literature: a tradition of acceptance of anthropomorphism, and even of radical anthropomorphization far beyond the rather restrained claims of the Hebrew Bible. This current may also be found in Midrashic literature, particularly in those passages which involve interpretation of the Song of Songs, and is traceable through the long-respected literature of *Shi'ur Qomah*,<sup>4</sup> which discusses the dimensions of the mystical body of God, the *Idrot* of the Zohar,<sup>5</sup> which deal in detail with such matters as the difference between the hairs of God's head and those of His beard, and the vast literature of Lurianic Kabbalah, which describes the various states of conjugal union of the male and female aspects of the Deity in strikingly unabashed detail.

Until rather recent times, it was still commonplace to present the former of these two tendencies as that of "normative" Rabbinic Judaism, while the latter was seen as a rather minor aberration of the mystics, surely not rooted in authentic Jewish sources and ways of thinking.<sup>6</sup> The direction of Jewish scholarship in the past few decades, however, has been one which expands the canon of the normative, often to the point where esoteric and exoteric doctrines are used to shed light upon one another.

The examination of a particularly rich complex of legends surrounding the suffering of Israel in Egypt and the crossing of the Sea of Reeds may serve to demonstrate anew the presence of this latter stream within the sources of Rabbinic literature and, indeed, may shed light on certain major theological motifs in Rabbinic Judaism.

We read in *Exodus Rabbah* 23:8, commenting on the Song of Moses:

Rabbi Judah says: "Who spoke the praise of God? The children whom Pharaoh had sought to cast into the Nile—they are the ones who recognized God. How is this? When Israel were in Egypt and an Israelite woman felt that she was about to give birth, she would go out to the fields and have her children there. After she had given birth, she would

---

butes, but that these cannot be perceived by living humans. In the classical discussions, however, the two issues are generally intertwined.

4. Lieberman, in "Appendix D," pp. 118–126 (G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* [New York, 1960]), has shown that the traditions of *Shi'ur Qomah* are related to ancient Midrashic understandings of the Song of Songs. Many of the sources discussed in this article have been collected and commented upon by Lieberman, though toward a somewhat different purpose.

5. These sections are not included in the five volumes of the Soncino translation of the Zohar, but their publication in English has now been announced by Roy A. Rosenberg, under the title *The Anatomy of God* (New York: Ktav, 1973). I have not yet seen this volume.

6. Discussions of the problem of anthropomorphism in Rabbinic Judaism are to be found in Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, v. 2 (London, 1937); Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York, 1952), Chapter VII; Urbach, *HaZal* (Jerusalem, 1969), pp. 30–35 and 75f, 131f.

leave the infant there, saying to God: 'Lord of the World! I have done mine, now You do yours!'"

Rabbi Yohanan said: "God Himself<sup>7</sup> would immediately come down to cut the umbilical cord and to wash and anoint the infant... He would place two stones in the child's hand. From one he could suckle oil, and from the other honey... and so the children would grow up in the fields... When they were asked: 'Who took care of you?', they replied: 'A certain beautiful and praiseworthy young man came down and took care of all our needs,' as is written: 'My beloved is fair and ruddy, a paragon among ten thousands'" (Cant. 5:10).

When Israel reached the Sea, those same children were among them. They saw God at the Sea, and said to their parents: "This is the one who did all those things for us when we were in Egypt!" Thus, Scripture says: "This is my God and I will glorify Him!" (Ex. 15:2).

The same legend appears in various forms in a number of Rabbinic sources. The relevant passages have been cited by Ginzberg<sup>8</sup> and Lieberman.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that a number of these versions sought to tell the tale in a theologically more guarded manner: It was the angels, rather than God Himself, who cared for the Israelite children. The price of such theological propriety was, however, the total obfuscation of the point of the legend. If the children had not seen God Himself in their infancy, but only an angel, how would they have been able to recognize the Lord when they saw Him at the Sea? Thus, Rabbi Yoḥanan's account, quoted elsewhere<sup>10</sup> in the name of Rabbi Hiyya, must be an original part of the tale. The children saw God Himself in Egypt, and it was in that same form, as the comely young man, described in the Song of Songs, that He appeared at the Sea.

Further examination of the versions of our legend will show that they abound, sometimes gratuitously, in allusions to verses from the Song of Songs. Thus, we find in Exodus Rabbah 1:12 that the Israelite women gave birth beneath apple trees in the fields, fulfilling the verse: "Beneath the apple-trees I roused you" (Cant. 8:5).<sup>11</sup> Another version has the mothers in Egypt asking their children, as they entered their parents' homes: "Tell me, my beloved, how did you feed? How did you lie down at midday?" (Cant. 1:7).<sup>12</sup> "The flocks of your companions" in the same verse is also viewed as a reference to the children, who came back to their homes like flocks returning from pasture.

The most complete version of this tale appears in a variant text of

7. Lit.: "in His glory" (*bi-khevodo*), but generally used to indicate God's own presence.

8. *Legends of the Jews*, v. 5, p. 394, n. 25.

9. Lieberman, *Op. cit.*, p. 120f.

10. See below, n. 13. In the version of this legend that is preserved in *Targum Jonathan* to Exodus 15:2, the angels have become quite superfluous.

11. The verse is also used in this context in B. *Sotah* 11b.

12. *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* (ed. Grünhut), p. 10.



Deuteronomy Rabbah.<sup>13</sup> It has a richness of detail lacking in the other sources, which makes it worthy of being quoted in its entirety:

"The Lord your God has caused you to multiply (Deut. 1:10)... " When did God cause you to multiply? In Egypt, as Scripture says: "I caused you to multiply like plants of the field (Ezek. 16:7)." How did this happen? When Pharaoh decreed that every male child be cast into the Nile, an Israelite woman would go out into the fields when she felt herself ready to give birth. After her child was born, she would turn her eyes heavenward and say: "I have done mine, as You have said: 'Be fruitful and multiply' (Gen. 1:28).<sup>14</sup> Now You do Yours!"

What would the Egyptians do when they saw the Israelite women going out to the fields to give birth? They would keep watch from some distance, but as soon as the woman got up to return to town, they would take rocks in their hands to kill the infant. As the Egyptians approached, however, the child would be swallowed up by the field. When the attackers moved away again, the child would reappear, but each time they approached, he would again be swallowed up by the field. This went on until the Egyptians tired of it and went away.

How did those children live in the fields? Said Rabbi Levi: "God would send two angels to each of them, one to wash him and one to dress him. They would provide for him to be nursed and anointed with oil, as is said: 'He suckled him with oil from the rock, and honey from the flint-stone' (Deut. 32:33). Thus, Scripture further says 'I bathed you in water . . . and gave you garments of brocade' (Ezek. 16:10)."<sup>15</sup>

Rabbi Hiyya Rabba said: "It was not the angels who did this, but rather God Himself, for Scripture says: 'I bathed you.'<sup>16</sup> Had the verse said: 'I caused you to be bathed,' one might think it was done by an angel. But 'I bathed you' means that there was no angel involved. Praised be the name of God! He Himself did this for them!"

The children grew up in the field like plants, and when they were grown they would return in flocks to their homes... But how would a child know the home of his own parents? God would go along with them, and to each child he would point out his father's house. He would tell them: "Your father is to be called thus, and your mother thus." The child would say to his mother: "Do you remember the day you gave birth to me, in such-and-such a field, on such-and-such a day, five months ago?" Then the mother would ask: "Who cared for you?" And the child would answer: "A young man with beautiful curls;<sup>17</sup> there is none like him. He brought me here and is waiting outside." The mother would say: "Show him to me." When they went outside, however, though they would search everywhere, they could never find him.

When they saw Him at the Sea of Reeds, they pointed with their fingers to show their mothers: "This is the one who raised me! 'This is my God and I will glorify Him!' " (Ex. 15:2).

The claims of such an Aggadic text are startling to the Jewish reader who has been trained in the later dominant tradition which teaches him

13. *Deuteronomy Rabbah* (ed. Lieberman), p. 14f.

14. An interesting formulation, in view of the fact that Jewish law considers this commandment to be binding only upon men.

15. This chapter is also often quoted in our legend, due to the strikingly direct applicability of Ezek. 16:4-7.

16. In the *qal* conjugation, rather than the *hif'il*.

17. A reflex of *Cant.* 5:11.

that all anthropomorphisms are to be explained away. It is not surprising, therefore, to find a later commentator attempting to apologize for our legend:

*A Certain Beautiful and Praiseworthy Young Man:* Any bodily attribute is far from being applicable to God, praised be He. The meaning here is rather that they *understood* that God, as a pure and holy transcendent power, had saved them through His providence . . . and the Scriptural passages quoted here are only meant figuratively and to serve as literary adornment.<sup>18</sup>

While it is true that other well-known Aggadic motifs speak of God Himself as having been directly present in the redemption from Egypt,<sup>19</sup> those sources do not speak of Israel *seeing* God in Egypt, but only indicate, as does the Biblical text itself, that they knew of His presence through His saving deeds. It is the physical manifestation of God in Egypt and at the Sea which lends to this text its unique significance.

The tale of the children in Egypt is always linked to the crossing of the Sea of Reeds. This latter event seems to take a central role in the speculations of certain of the early Rabbis, a role which goes even beyond those of the plagues in Egypt or the Exodus itself.<sup>20</sup> It is only by understanding the significance of that event to the Midrashic authors that we may come to understand the boldness with which our legend speaks of God's appearance. In order to do so, however, we must turn our attention not to the Song of the Sea, as one might expect, but, rather, to the Song of Songs.

There is considerable difference of opinion in Rabbinic sources as to the authorship and original setting of this Biblical book. While some views unhesitatingly accept the ascription to Solomon, in the first verse, and speak of Canticles as one of the three books which Solomon wrote under the guidance of the holy spirit,<sup>21</sup> others try to trace the origin

18. *Yefeh To'ar* to *Exodus Rabbah* 23:8.

19. The famous passage which appears in the Passover Haggadah and in *Mekhilta* Bo. 7 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 23) has been discussed by Judah Goldin in his article, "Not by Means of an Angel and Not by Means of a Messenger" in *Studies in the History of Religion*, 1968 (Goodenough Memorial Volume), pp. 412ff. The articles by Morton Smith in that volume (pp. 315ff) and in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 1958, also have bearing on the subject matter of this paper.

20. A contrary view, according to which the Exodus is given primacy over the splitting of the Sea, is recorded in *Exodus Rabbah* 22:3, couched in halakhic terms. The obligation to make daily mention of the Exodus in the blessing which follows the recitation of the *Shema* is more stringent than that to recall the events at the Sea. Two reasons are given: the Exodus was the more difficult of the two feats, and it is mentioned in conjunction with God's name in the first commandment, while the splitting of the Sea is not. The discussion concludes with the statement that the crossing of the Sea is worthy of mention in the liturgy only because it brought Israel to have faith (Ex. 14:31). One wonders whether this downplay of the centrality of the events at the Sea is not a direct polemic against those tendencies, discussed below, which saw such great significance in those events.

21. *Canticles Rabbah* 1:1:10.

of the Song of Songs to the generation of the Exodus, claiming that the *Shelomoh* of the superscription refers not to Solomon, but to the King of Peace, and thus claim God Himself as the author of the Song.

Rabbi Akiba, in describing the Song of Songs as the “holy of holies” within Scripture,<sup>22</sup> refers to “the day when the Song of Songs was given to Israel.” The term “given” is the same as that consistently applied in Rabbinic literature to the revelation at Sinai; it would not be applied to a work of human authorship, even one written under divine inspiration. Other Midrashic sources discuss quite plainly whether it was God or the angels who first recited the Song of Songs.<sup>23</sup>

What was the “day on which the Song of Songs was given?” “Where was it said?” asks Midrash.<sup>24</sup> Various answers are supplied—at the Sea, at Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, in the Temple—and appropriate verses are adduced to support each opinion. As Lieberman has shown,<sup>25</sup> each of these opinions has its roots in the Tannaitic schools. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus teaches that the Song of Songs was said at the Sea,<sup>26</sup> Rabbi Akiba is the author of the view that it was first recited at Sinai,<sup>27</sup> Rabbi Meir traces it to the Tent of Meeting, and an anonymous Tannaitic source holds that its origin was in the Temple.

The latter three opinions can all be readily explained. That the “holy of holies” was revealed at the holiest of moments, at Sinai,<sup>28</sup> should come as no surprise. The Tent of Meeting is also the site of revelation, a more intimate revelation, as it was apprehended only by Moses. The Temple as the original location of the Song of Songs fits well with the tradition of Solomonian authorship. It is only the suggestion of Rabbi Eliezer that seems in need of further explication. The verse quoted by R. Hanina bar Papa: “I would compare you, my dearest, to Pharaoh’s chariot-horses” (Cant. 1:9),<sup>29</sup> hardly seems to provide sufficient justification for such an elaborate claim. Nor does the exegesis of Canticles 2:14, ascribed to Rabbi Eliezer himself<sup>30</sup> seem particularly convincing. The opinion that the Song of Songs was first said or “given” at the Sea of Reeds must be based on something other than the exegesis of the text itself.

22. *Mishnah Yadayim* 3:5.

23. *Canticles Rabbah* 1:2; *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta*, beginning. Cf. Lieberman, *Op. cit.*, p. 118f.

24. *Canticles Rabbah* 1:2.

25. Lieberman, *Op. cit.*, p. 119.

26. *Mekhilta de-RaSHbi* (ed. Epstein), p. 143; *Canticles Rabbah* 2:14.

27. *Mekhilta de-RaSHbi*, loc. cit. In that text, the controversy is presented as one specifically between R. Akiba and R. Eliezer. See Lieberman, for the other sources.

28. This interpretation accords particularly well with the interpretation of R. Akiba’s view of the unique centrality of Sinai, as propounded by A. J. Heschel in his *Torah Min ha-Shamayim*, v. 2 (London, 1965).

29. *Canticles Rabbah* 1:2.

30. *Mekhilta de-RaSHbi*, loc. cit.

Fortunately, another text is preserved, in the name of Rabbi Eliezer, on the very same verse around which our legend was elaborated:

"This is my God and I will glorify Him (Ex: 15:2)." Rabbi Eliezer comments: "How do we know that a handmaiden at the Sea saw more than Isaiah or Ezekiel? From the verse 'I speak through the prophets in parables'" (Hosea 12:11).<sup>31</sup>

The prophets know God only through *demut*, parables or similitudes, while the handmaiden at the Sea actually *sees* in a way not vouchsafed to prophets! Rabbi Eliezer conceives of the crossing of the Sea as a moment of *seeing*, as an experience of revelation higher than that granted even to the greatest visionaries among the prophets of Israel. We are now dealing, not only with a moment of miraculous salvation at the Sea of Reeds, but with a theophany which, as we shall see, is comparable to that of Sinai itself. While such a moment of revelation is not mentioned in the Biblical narrative, it seems possible that the verse "Israel saw the great hand" (Ex. 14:31) may have been a point of departure for such speculations.

In the context of Rabbi Eliezer's view of the event at the Sea, the legend with which we began takes on new meaning. It is not accidental that the vision of God as a comely young man was vouchsafed to those children who were to stand at the Sea, any more than it is accidental that our legend is replete with references to the Song of Songs. The crossing of the Sea is the moment of a great visionary experience, and it is the day on which the Song of Songs was given. And what is the content of this vision? The God whom the handmaiden sees at the Sea is none other than that black-curled young man whom the children saw in Egypt, the lover of the Song of Songs! Nor is the "handmaiden" herself coincidental. What more appropriate image for Israel than that of the handmaiden, who, at the final moment of her long-awaited liberation, sees her bridegroom coming toward her?

The vision of God as a young man at the Sea is not unknown in other Rabbinic sources. A series of Aggadot which seek to attest to the oneness of God, despite His varied appearances, make reference to God's appearance at the Sea as a young warrior:

*The Lord Is a Man of War* (Ex. 15:3) Why is this said? Because He was revealed at the Sea as a warrior in battle . . . and at Sinai as an old man full of compassion . . . Scripture took care not to allow an opening for the nations of the world to say "They are two domains." "YHWH is a man of war, YHWH is His name." He it was in Egypt; He it was at the

31. *Mekhilta Shirta* 3, (ed. Horowitz-Rabin), p. 126. Cf. the translation and commentary by Judah Goldin in *The Song at the Sea* (New Haven, 1971), p. 112. The Rabbinic understanding of the stem *DMH* as meaning "to make similitudes" is well-attested by *Genesis Rabbah* 27:1 and its many parallels. A study of the meaning of various terms derived from this stem could have interesting implications for a better understanding of classical Jewish theology.

Sea. He was in the past and He shall be in the future! He is in this World to Come! Thus Scripture says: "See now that I, I am He" (Deut. 32:39)<sup>32</sup> And it is written: "Unto old age I am He" (Is. 46:4) and further: "Thus says the Lord of Hosts, King and Redeemer of Israel: I am the Lord of Hosts, the first and the last..." (Is. 44:6).<sup>33</sup>

This motif of the two theophanies, that of the warrior at the Sea and that of the compassionate elderly man, sometimes depicted as a judge, entered Jewish liturgy through the *Shir ha-Kavod*, composed in Medieval Germany and still recited in the Ashkenazic rite. While some Midrashic sources list three or even four examples of God's varying revealed forms (the revelations to Solomon and Daniel are added),<sup>34</sup> the central place of Sinai and the Sea is maintained.<sup>35</sup> The implications of this motif, namely that the people of Israel experienced *two* great moments of collective revelation in the great period of their sacred history, have seldom been drawn out in the literature of Jewish theology.

With Sinai and the Sea established as the two great moments of Israel's revelation, we may now proceed one step further in our analysis of Rabbi Eliezer's view that the Song of Songs was "given" at the crossing of the Sea, particularly as contrasted with the view of Rabbi Akiba. He may agree with Akiba that the Song of Songs is "holy of holies," recited at the greatest moment of Israel's revelation. But he chooses to assign that dignity to the Sea, rather than to Sinai. Alternatively, it may be argued that Akiba seeks to identify the lover of Canticles with the God of Sinai, in keeping with the tradition which sees Sinai as the moment of sacred marriage between God and Israel. Eliezer takes the obvious difference between the two moments more seriously; if Sinai is a revelation of God as elderly judge, the Song of Songs is hardly an appropriate metaphor for that particular moment. The Song, in his view, describes not the fatherly compassion of the God of Sinai; its erotic tone is appropriate rather to the handsome young hero of the Sea!

These two images, God as young lover-bridegroom and God as com-

32. The continuation of the verse reads: "There is no god beside Me." Isaiah 44:6 continues in similar fashion; a pointed reference to this phrase seems to be clearly indicated.

33. *Mekhilla Shirta* 4, p. 129f. Translation and commentary by Goldin, *Op. cit.*, p. 126ff. The Lauterbach text from which Goldin has translated omits the two verses from Isaiah here quoted, and substitutes Isaiah 41:4. Might these verses, particularly 46:4, have been too offensively sharp a reference at some point in the history of Jewish-Christian relations, and thus have been replaced by the less pointed verse in the Lauterbach text?

34. *She'iltot, 'eqev* #145 (ed. Jerusalem 1966/67, p. 203) and other sources.

35. Note, for example, in the Addenda to *Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim* (ed. Shechter, p. 87), that although God is said to reveal Himself in "many" forms, the only two examples given are those of Sinai and the Sea. In the above-quoted *Mekhilla* text [see footnote 33], the images of God ascribed to Sinai and Daniel seem to be conflated into a single figure of the elderly, throned judge. Cf. also Grünhut's edition of *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim*, pp. 50b-51a.

passionate father-judge, may be seen as the central metaphors in the Rabbinic discussion of the love of God. In the course of later Jewish literature, however, (with the notable exception of the Kabbalah) the former image seems to all but disappear. Jewish liturgy, which had a tremendous impact on the imagination of later generations, is almost exclusively a liturgy of the father/king.<sup>36</sup> Where the God of the Sea does appear, He is warrior, but not lover. While this process of literary change is a long and complicated one, a significant clue to one aspect of it may be found in a text we have already examined.

"YHWH is His name" in Exodus 15:3 was written in order "not to allow an opening for the nations of the world to say: 'They are two domains.' " Who are these "nations of the world" who would distinguish between the young man of the Sea and the elderly father figure of Sinai? It seems most likely that the reference is to Christianity and its distinction between the Father and the Son.<sup>37</sup> In the face of the distinctions made between the two Persons even in pre-trinitarian Christian doctrine, the Rabbis sought to assert in the strongest terms that God as elder and God as young man are one and the same. The verses quoted in the text, particularly Isaiah 44:6, seem clearly suggestive of the early Jewish-Christian polemic.

This understanding of the passage of the Mekhilta is confirmed by another version of the same Aggadah, where its anti-Christian character is still more obvious:

"Face to face the Lord spoke to you" (Deut. 5:4). Rabbi Levi said: "In many images He appeared to them. To one He appeared standing; to another, seated. To one as an old man; to another as a youth. How is this? When God was revealed at the Sea of Reeds to do battle for His children and to demand of the Egyptians their due, He appeared as a youth, for battle is appropriate only to the young. But when God revealed Himself at Sinai to give Torah to Israel, He appeared as an elder. Why? For it is written: 'Wisdom is with the aged, and length of days is understanding' (Job 12:12). Thus Daniel says: 'I kept looking until the thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days took His seat' (Dan 7:9)."

36. The liturgical exception to this general trend is to be found in the *Piyyutim* for certain occasions. In the Ashkenazic rite, several of the *Yozerot* and *Ofanim* are noteworthy examples of the religious use of the romantic metaphor. It is also interesting to note that later Jewish liturgical practice supports the view of Rabbi Eliezer that the Song of Songs was recited at the Sea, by assigning its place in the liturgical calendar at Passover (and on the seventh day, if there is no intermediate Sabbath). The seventh day of Passover is taken to be the day when the Sea was crossed.

37. Unlike those *shtei reshuyot* passages discussing Creation, there is no sense of demonic force or demiurge implied here. It thus seems unlikely that the reference would be to Gnostic or other dualisms, but entirely appropriate that it be to orthodox Christianity. It is especially worthy of note that Canticles 5:10, which appears so prominently in this series of legends, is interpreted by the church father Theodoret as referring to Jesus. The relevant passage is quoted by Raphael Loewe in his article "The Targum to the Song of Songs in Biblical Motifs" (Lown Institute, *Studies and Texts*, v. 3, [Cambridge, 1966]), p. 187.

Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said: "If the son of a whore should say to you: 'There are two gods,' answer him: 'I am He at the Sea; I am He at Sinai.'" <sup>38</sup>

The likelihood that *bar zenayta* (son of a whore) here is a Christian was already noted by Meir Friedmann in his edition of *Pesikta Rabbati*.

We are now in a position to suggest why it happened that the God of the Sea of Reeds, particularly insofar as He was lover and not just warrior, disappears from later Jewish literature. The Rabbis could not hold onto this image of God in the face of the Christian usage. Christianity usurped from Judaism the image of the youthful Deity; the archetype of God as young lover/hero became so deeply identified with Jesus in the Western world that it lost its place in Judaism. By default, exoteric Judaism was left with the worship of God the Father. True, the Song of Songs was retained as sacred Scripture, but it was overlaid with national and historical allegory<sup>39</sup> which left little room for its original passion, and it was linked with Sinai rather than the Sea. Only the Kabbalists, with their re-assertion of bold anthropomorphism and religious eroticism, were able to reveal again the God of the children in Egypt and the handmaiden at the Sea.

<sup>38</sup>. *Pesikta Rabbati* 21:6; ed. Friedmann, pp. 100b-101a, and cf. Friedmann's notes *ad. loc.* Recent scholarship confirms Friedmann's suggestion: Cf. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, v. 10, s.v. "Jesus."

<sup>39</sup>. On the exoteric and esoteric aspects of Jewish interpretations of the Song of Songs, cf. the comments by Abraham Halkin in the *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*, p. 392 ff. and R. Loewe's important article quoted in note 37.



# *The Question of Secular Judaism*

TSVI BISK

THIS HAS NOT BEEN A BAD DECADE FOR INTENSE pinched-cheeked Jewish intellectuals and New Jews talking about redemption. With Judaism once again in vogue in neo-ethnic America, for example, and with groups of relatively large (large in relation to what went before) numbers of young sensitive Jews "rediscovering" Judaism, the question of content arises. "What will our Judaism be?" It can't be establishment (God forbid!); Reform is Goyish, Conservatism is vulgar, and Orthodox is square and provincial. No, it must be new, it must have color, it must be exotic, it must—after all—be ethnic (and this above all).

So we find our young Jewish intellectuals sitting around and creating Jewish Disneylands, wherein we find: "Hasidland," "Sefardiland," "Litvakland," "Yemeniteland," "Musarland," etc., etc., ad infinitum, ad nauseam. The startling original conclusions on this matter are usually that we must combine the best parts of all of these various Jewish cultures into a kind of Jewish goulash—and that this goulash must serve as the basis for a future collective Jewish identity.

Though one may be personally attracted to many aspects of these cultural "lands" in one's search for a meaningful Jewish cultural content, these endeavors are quite depressing when applied to the concept of a collective Jewish enterprise, for they are sunk in the past. And, on this subject, I am forced to agree with the black intellectual, Arthur Lewis, when, in refuting black cultural nationalism, he said:

... only decadent peoples on the way down feel an urgent need to mythologize and live in their past. A vigorous people, on the way up, is more concerned with visions of its future.

When we speak of collective Jewish undertakings which are of relevance we are talking about 1) Jewish Survival and 2) a new World Jewish Civilization based on the reality of a National Center in Israel and a Universal Diaspora. When we are talking about this we are talking about Jewish Futurism, about attacking the future problems of Judaism, and about building possible models for the future of Judaism. To turn our heads backwards at this juncture—to create Jewish Disneylands—is not irrelevant, it is suicidal.

---

TSVI BISK, a former American, is a research assistant for the Israel Labour Party at Beit Berl.

*Rambam and the Gaon of Vilna*

In the past, there were many cases of great Jews leading the battle for relevance in the ongoing struggle for Jewish survival. The battle, in the context of their times, was religious. It was also preoccupied with the present, their present. Thus, Rambam combined Greek philosophy with Jewish theology and saved the best of the Jewish intellect for the Jewish fold. The Gaon of Vilna's confrontation with *his* present was not philosophical, as was the Rambam's; it was, rather, practical. He simply recognized the impact of secular learning on his world and, therefore, encouraged his followers to undertake the study of science, mathematics, and languages. With his growing example, what one may call the "Litvak Cultural Revolution" took place and a *fanatic* concern for secular education took hold of Ashkenazi Jewry, a concern which characterizes it to this day. (For despite today's infatuation with the Hasidim, it was the Litvak character which permeated, prodded and molded Ashkenazi Jewry.) It was this fact which cushioned the shock of the impact of Western civilization on Ashkenazi Jewry and that paved the way for their startling success during the past 200 years, a success which C. P. Snow has compared to that of the Athenians in its scope and influence on world history.

Neither the Rambam nor the Gaon of Vilna satiated himself with the lazy luxury of Jewish Disneyland (with "Sinailand," "Davidland," "Hasmoneanland," etc.). Instead, each accepted the much more difficult task of creating a new Jewish reality with which to confront his time. Today, we must confront the future if we intend to be relevant, for the rhythm of progress has, if we may be so bold, destroyed the present; now there is only the future and the past. And since we live in the future, and not in the past, it is the future which should preoccupy our thinkers.

*Second Temple Model*

But even the Rambam and the Gaon of Vilna are not our proper models in regard to the present world Jewish situation. We find ourselves, after 2,000 years, with a national center and a universal Diaspora and, thus, we are forced to look back to the times of the Second Temple, after the partial return from the Babylonian Exile and the nascent struggle to resettle the homeland. It was during that time that the Bible was compiled, that monotheism was developed, and that the greater part of the Talmud was written. These are the greatest jewels of Jewish civilization and we may assume that, to a significant extent, they were the fruit of this confrontation between the national center and the universal Diaspora (universal in the context of those days). It is from this model that we must draw inspiration when creating Jewish futures—for the

year 2,000 and even for the 21st century—inspiration, not guidance.

But, in facing the future, we must confront the curious fact that the religious cultural stress in regard to Jewish collective behavior is obsolete. We are faced with the paradoxical fact that nothing will be less religious than a civilization which will spring from the religious civilization of the Jews. Unless the direction of collective Jewish behaviour is secular and a-cultural, we will automatically divide the Jewish people, rather than unite them (and, make no mistake, unity of purpose is very important for Jewish survival). Harking back to religious models in a search for relevance is ridiculous in an age which is secular. And we *do* live in a secular age. In this age, religion is every man's own private business; culture is worldwide and cosmopolitan; and each individual *chooses* the right religio-cultural combination for himself. Culture is not given—it is chosen; religion is not collective—it is individual. Therefore, the search for *specific Jewish life-styles* in order to mold the collective behaviour of the Jew is futile.

### *Mordecai Kaplan*

The great Mordecai Kaplan (the most original and, perhaps, the greatest rabbinic figure which American Jewry has produced) recognized the malaise of 20th century Jewry. As long ago as 1924, in his booklet, *A New Approach to the Problems of Judaism*, he offered a brilliant analysis of the Jewish condition and, in a definition of aims, which is as concise and relevant today as it was then, he wrote:

First, we must participate in the renaissance of the Hebrew Language and Literature; secondly, we must give unstinting support to all forms of Jewish scholarship; and, thirdly, we must accept the rebuilding of Palestine as the foremost religious duty of the Jew.

Unfortunately, Rabbi Kaplan was trapped by religious conceptions whose inertia skidded them into the 20th century. Therefore, despite the noble aims and the grand sweep of his vision, he succeeded only in creating a very minor fourth Jewish sect. Because he failed to see the essential difference of the 20th century in relation to all of previous history, he divided the Jewish people even more and contributed very little to the furtherance of his own aims.

And our Jewish radicals are no different. By seeking "to interpret Judaism as a primary source, rather than work through the secondary media of the various sects . . .,"<sup>1</sup> they will simply create a *new* sect—the Jewish counterculture sect. Incidentally, the various counter-culture groups all disagree, which further proves my thesis that Judaism today is individual and pluralistic, rather than collective and monolithic.

1. Bill Novak, letter in *The Reconstructionist* (April 2, 1971).

All this is not to say that Judaism as a specifically religious endeavor (or religion at all) is not relevant. It is; but only in the following spheres:

1) when contemplating the fact of existence at all; the fact that existence exists, and

2) when communing with one's own soul.

All detailed metaphysical pretensions of *every* religion are shattered for now and forevermore by science. All religious attempts to organize large masses of people to believe in one simple set of ideas, to adopt one homogenic culture, are hopelessly outdated. The "sense of community" which our radical friends prate about is nice, but it has no bearing on the collective struggle for Jewish survival. In this respect, by the way, we can never lose sight of the fact that "community" is inimical to "freedom." The more people we have believing in one set of ideas and functioning in one cultural framework the less freedom we have: this is *a priori*. But is this desirable? Is it what we want? *Is it possible at all in the light of today's liberal pluralistic reality?* Our perception for future Jewish models must be pluralistic. This means that the general framework must be secular and programatic—not religious or ideological, although various groups may be religious or ideological within the general framework. This must be so for the simple fact that the majority of the Jewish people are secular, as the following statement shows:

One must understand that in the U.S. there is a kind of Jewish Unity, but not in the area of religion. Within organized Judaism there are about one million and a half Conservative Jews, one million Reform Jews and about a million Orthodox Jews. The rest are unaffiliated (except for a small group of Reconstructionists). Thus we find that as far as the organized Jewish religion is concerned more than 70% are outside the Orthodox camp... We must also take into account the millions of *unaffiliated* Jews in the U.S. and in other countries. Among these are counted both intellectuals and the rank and file.<sup>2</sup>

To put this statement in a more far-reaching perspective, we are forced to point out further that the vast majority of Reform and Conservative Jews are secular. They are not religious even within the religious self-definition of their sects. Their identification is primarily ethnic and not religious. They neither believe in a Jewish God nor do they practice Jewish *mizvot*. Rather, they sense a uniqueness about themselves as products of a unique historical and spiritual enterprise. They sense a sacredness about their continued Jewish existence and identity, and for want of a better alternative they "join" the congregation or Temple (need I point out that truly religious Jews have no need to *join*, they are and belong already by virtue of their belief). We can conclude, therefore, that American Jewry is approximately 85% secular.

2. Cyrus Weiler, "Who Is A Jew?" *The Reconstructionist* (April 2, 1971).

We may deduce that this is a model for all of Diaspora Jewry. Add to this the overwhelmingly secular nature of our Russian brethren and of the citizens of Israel and of European Jewry and we must conclude that any attempt to face the problems of Jewish survival and of the creation of a new world Jewish civilization and culture must be within a secular framework. The unifying character of halakhah, that set of rules by which all of the Jewish sects and tribes judged their behaviour, is gone for good. What is needed is a secular equivalent of the halakhah, i.e., a *program* by which every Jew in the world—from Lubavicher rabbi to Marxist kibbutznik—can judge his behaviour.

### *Israel As A Secular Example*

The State of Israel offers an example, a model, as it were, for all of world Jewry. For it was in this essentially secular endeavor (and who can doubt that the creation of a state is anything other than a secular endeavor, notwithstanding the religious fervor and mysticism which may or may not go into its building) where we find Rav Kook and Mapam kibbutzniks joining in a mutual admiration society and cooperating to build the homeland. This secular example of Israel must be expanded to all of world Jewry. From class to nation—from nation to civilization.

This new halakhah, this secular program, must be pragmatic in tone if it is to appeal to the modern Jew. Note what Rabbi Phillip Sigal has to say on this matter about the American Jew:

The Jew in America is a pragmatist. He wants to know, even if he finds it difficult to articulate, what he has to do to express his Judaism. He is interested in *how* and not *why*. He wants a guide. And he wants this guide to grant him spiritual gratification. He remains cold, however, to the code of law that delighted his grandfather but is meaningless to him . . . but he still want to know *how*. Instead he is offered fund-raising, anti-Semitism, panic on intermarriage and the Middle Eastern problem. One might say that in fact "survival" has become the hall mark of the modern Jewish problem. By staying away from worship the average Jew indicates eloquently the tedium he no longer desires to endure . . . He cannot pray for rain in October and is unable to get excited over medieval poems containing mystical allusions that are religiously unavailable to modern men even when they are translated with clarity and grace.

The great lesson of our story is that . . . syllogisms, appeals to history, and dogmatic references to tradition will not foster the continuity of our heritage. What is needed is a massive attempt to understand, in Holmes' words, "the prevalent moral and political theories" and how they are related to Judaism and how Judaism can, in a relevant manner, be brought to bear on them.<sup>3</sup>

What may be some aspects of this secular programmatic approach? First of all, we must develop a secular equivalent of the yeshivot, around which was (and is) centered the cultural vitality of Orthodox Jewry. One

3. Phillip Sigal, "Jewish and American Pragmatism," JUDAISM (Spring, 1970).

step towards the formation of a secular spiritual consciousness would be the development of a comprehensive system of Jewish Colleges, Junior Colleges, Study Institutes, Free Universities and Study Retreats. The Brandeis Institute in Los Angeles is a good example, as are several of the Jewish Free Universities.

Secondly, we must give the Jewish people a common Jewish language. Nothing unites like language, and nothing is more fundamental to the development of a sovereign culture. Yiddish and Ladino were the first languages of the Jews during the heyday of Orthodox culture and before the creation of the State of Israel. Today, Hebrew is the natural candidate for a uniting bond. It is ridiculous to expect that it become the first language of Diaspora Jewry, but it is not farfetched to expect that the majority of Diaspora Jewry might acquire a working knowledge of Hebrew as a second language.

Thirdly, American Jewry especially must begin to realize its tremendous cultural and spiritual potential. Too often and too easily has American Jewry been compared to Babylonian, Spanish or East European Jewry. The truth is that this comparison exists only in the potential sense—American Jewry has never fulfilled its cultural and spiritual promise. It has satisfied itself with nostalgic Yiddishkeit; with being a cultural offshoot of East European Jewry. It has never really delved into the originality of its own Jewish condition (with the sole exception of Mordecai Kaplan). Actually, it suffers from a cultural inferiority complex in regard to East European Jewry. Without American Jewry rejuvenating itself with an imaginative analysis of its condition and a concise delineation of its aims, there is not much hope for Jewry in general.

Fourthly, a new relationship must be worked out between Israel and the Diaspora—especially American Jewry. This relationship must be characterized by equality and honesty. Each side must recognize the legitimate right constructively to criticize the other. The Diaspora must have greater ambitions than to be a glorified fund-raising committee for Israel; and Israel must beware of becoming a financial fiefdom of American Jewry. This approach must, of necessity, stem from a new perception of the Jewish condition. Both sides must stop seeing each other in stereotypes and begin to take one another seriously. Frankness must prevail. At this juncture in Jewish history, there is no time to be cute.

### *The Character of a New Relationship*

The Jewish condition has undergone a radical change with the creation of the Jewish State. For the first time in almost 2,000 years, the Jewish people have a real place, and a real society in which to fulfill their messianic promise with concrete accomplishments, as they did in

the period following the first return from exile and the building of the Second Temple. "Give me a place to stand, and I will move the universe," said the Greek. The Jews have been given a place to stand and they may do just that.

Problems present opportunities. Israel, being at an interim stage of development, embodies most of the problems facing both the developed and the developing worlds. It is at once concerned with the rapid economic development which preoccupies the developing world and with the quality of life and alienation which troubles the developed world. Israel is unique in that it is a developing country with a huge reserve of the highest level of scientific talent (natural and social)—both in Israel and in the Diaspora. The translation of this fantastic potential, without repeating the alienating mistakes of the developed world, is the problem of human society in microcosm.

By becoming a living laboratory, by exploiting Jewish talents that would be dedicated to creating new scientific and social frameworks which would best solve the problems facing itself and the world, Israel would not only solve them, and thereby provide a whole new vista for absorbing Aliyah and involving the Diaspora intelligentsia in specific and positive Jewish activities, but it would be squarely facing the basic ideological, spiritual problems which confront the Jewish people, and, by doing so, *further* attract our alienated Jewish intelligentsia.

After all, why be Jewish? Obviously, Jews are the only ones who continually ask themselves this question. The negative reply or the non-reply to this question is what results in so much assimilation amongst our intelligent brethren. Being a World Laboratory dedicated to solving, through a Jewish framework, those epic problems which face the human race, would go a long way towards compromising the tension between national and universal redemption which has torn at both Judaism and Jew. For only by accenting Jewish national uniqueness can the universal task be accomplished, and only by undertaking the universal task can the Jewish nation strengthen itself sufficiently so that its physical survival will be guaranteed.

Israel is the only nation whose essential, national values are invested with universal implications, i.e., you can not truly be a national Jew unless you are also a citizen of the human race. The ultimate dream of the Jewish instinct is the unity of the human race; this is set against the Greek vision of even a giant such as Plato whose most ambitious hope was the unity of the Greek people. To paraphrase Joseph Ratner's description of Spinoza, we must become prophets in Israel for mankind (and for ourselves).



*The Jew As Spiritual Halutz*

But the most important task of the Jew, for himself and the world, is to become once again the spiritual *halutz* of civilization. The advent of the Space Age is the most significant event in the history of life since the first amphibian left the water; it represents perhaps the most radical departure from the past.

Judaism and Jewry, like the rest of humanity, must come to grips with this development, not only in technological terms, but in spiritual terms. In that way Judaism may also create a model of universal value, just as it created ethical monotheism in response to its unique position in the ancient world.

This development must not come in the place of our rich cultural and historical heritage. On the contrary, it must come in its name and must have as its aim the fulfillment of the prophetic-messianic dream of Peace, Plenty and Justice, which began as a religious dream but which is destined to be fulfilled as a secular reality. The Jews must have two legs—one in the past and one in the future—and I have no doubts as to which is the most important: we live in the future and not in the past, and where we live, and will live, is more important than where we have lived and where we can live no more.

*Secular Messianism*

A secular definition of Judaism demands a secular definition of Messianism. And here we have, I believe, the core, the first axiom of a secular Jewish education.

According to religious Judaism, the Messiah will be sent, or designated, or motivated, or inspired by God. In secular Judaism, the Messiah can be created by man. The psychological roots of this concept must find their roots, of course, in religious Judaism. In Eastern religions there is no Messiah—only Nirvana and everlasting death; in Christianity, the Messiah has come; only in Judaism is he still to come. Thus, every Jew is, of necessity, subconsciously haunted by the thought that he may be the Messiah, that he may have Messianic obligations. For Jewish intellectuals—those who are able to articulate and analyze their emotions—this has practical and concrete ramifications. One is the disproportionate involvement of Jews in political and social movements and other movements of reform.

In secular Judaism we must make Messianism a cornerstone of our identity. We must inculcate in our children the feeling that each may be the Messiah, that each is obligated to try to become the Messiah.

*Assimilation and Anti-Assimilation*

In regard to secular Judaism, I feel that it would be instructive to say a few words about the concept of assimilation. Assimilation has a double meaning in English: you may assimilate, and you may be assimilated into. When you drink a glass of water you assimilate the water; when you fall into the sea and drown you are assimilated into that water. A Jew, confident of his Jewishness and sure of his Jewish destiny, may listen to Mozart, read Kant, use western managerial techniques and technology without fear that he is impinging on his Jewish consciousness. In short, he may assimilate the best of other cultures and civilizations without fear. It is when he turns German culture or American civilization into his *ideal* that he is in danger of being assimilated into it.

The Jews have always absorbed from other cultures—Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Western civilization. In each period it was the middle way which assimilated, but was not assimilated into, that triumphed. In each period it was not only the assimilationists who vanished from the face of history, it was also the conservative fanatics. At the time of the second return, it was the Samaritans, with their exaggerated loyalty to a provincial monism at the expense of the new, more cosmopolitan Jewish monotheism, which caused them eventually to vanish from the earth. (Today, they are numbered in the hundreds, while once they numbered in the millions.)

It was the Pharisee way—the moderate, middle, assimilating, but not assimilating into, way—which survived both the Zealots and the Sadducees. In the Middle Ages, the Karaite attempt to return to a simpler pre-rabbinic past met with notable failure, while the Rambam's way of assimilating Aristotelian thought to Jewish needs became the base of mainstream Jewish thought for centuries to come. Try to imagine modern Jewry surviving without the fantastic intellectual achievements which find their sociological roots in the Gaon of Vilna. Today, also, we must find the Middle Way: to assimilate the developments of the Space Age and the Scientific Societies to the needs of the Jewish people and, by so doing, to create a vigorous new Jewish reality which will serve both the spiritual needs of the Jews and of the world.

I would point out that there is a very thin line between anti-assimilation and racism. Today, the guise of anti-assimilation is often used to disguise sublimated (and not so sublimated) racism, and can only be prevented from degenerating into racism, if it is positive. And it is my thesis that it can only be positive for 85% of the Jewish people if it comes to some kind of terms with their secular reality.

# *Is There a Jewish Way to Fight?*

MICHAEL BROWN

IN RECENT TIMES, JEWS HAVE STOOD ACCUSED OF having either of two attitudes to war and violence: eagerness to die or eagerness to kill. There is, on the one hand, the Holocaust, in which six million Jews went to their deaths chanting of the coming of the Messiah and of God's redemption. On the other, there is the image of the Israeli soldier himself as Nazi, marching almost gaily through villages of innocent Arabs, killing and pillaging. Both images are, of course, caricatures; both ignore historical reality. Neither is representative of mainstream Jewish thinking about war and violence.

## I

The difficulty in making a case for quietism within the classical Jewish tradition has been shown in two brief studies which have appeared in recent years.<sup>1</sup> Numerous rabbinic aphorisms in praise of peace can be cited, and one out-of-the-way chapter of the Talmud consists of little except such pious platitudes.<sup>2</sup> For that matter, the ancient rabbis conceived of themselves as men endeavoring to bring peace to the world through their mastery of the sacred texts.<sup>3</sup> But the rabbis were not pacifists. They did not feel that anyone had a right to look upon evil in the world and remain silent. It was not a virtue to die for one's ideals, if there were a way to live to propagate them.<sup>4</sup> And in order to live, one was fully entitled, indeed commanded, to protect himself, even if that meant engaging in violence, and for the nation that meant war.

The myth of Jewish pacificism, of eager martyrdom, is born partly out of a misreading of history and partly out of the tendency to transform necessity into a virtue. As a scattered minority for generations, without the means or the know-how to engage in armed struggle with any chance of success, Jews, when threatened, frequently could do nothing except elect to die well. One could certainly make such a case for the martyrs of the Middle Ages. It is also the reality of the Jewish geo-

---

1. Reuven Kimelman, "Non-Violence in the Talmud," *JUDAISM* (Summer, 1968): 316-334; Sheldon Zimmerman, "Confronting the Halakhah on Military Service," *JUDAISM* (Spring, 1971): 204-212.

2. "Perek Hashalom" in Babylonian Talmud, *Derekh Erez Zuta*.

3. "Scholars bring peace to the world. . . ." (Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 64a).

4. See Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 85b and other places.

---

MICHAEL BROWN is a rabbi ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He is currently associate professor of language studies and humanities at York University in Toronto.

political situation in twentieth century Europe, critics like Hannah Arendt of Jewish wartime behavior notwithstanding.<sup>5</sup> To wage guerilla warfare one must be able to count upon the support of the surrounding population for shelter and supplies. In eastern Europe that was not forthcoming. It was doubtless more comforting to commend one's self to God than to the mercies of anti-Semitic Polish or Ukrainian peasants. Moreover, it is hard to see how those Jews who, for generations in the West, had been accustomed to considering themselves part of the societies in which they lived, and who were certainly not trained to react to danger by taking up arms against their neighbors, could have—in time—mustered the will and the technical skills to revolt. As the record of their gentile neighbors shows, revolt did not come easily to most of them either. Under the circumstances there was little to do except to die well. Some, of course, did overcome the obstacles, and did fight, either with the Resistance Movement in the West or in the ghetto revolts in the East. Probably the percentage of Jews who engaged in armed resistance to the Nazis was ultimately not much different from that of the non-Jews. But these revolts, especially in the East, had little chance of success; and the Jews who fought certainly knew that. The question for them, no less than for those who went more quietly to their deaths, was not whether to live by fighting or to die passively, but rather how to die.

There is a further dimension to alleged Jewish passivity. In his stunningly ironic short story, "The Sermon," Haim Hazzaz has his protagonist, Yudke (little Jew), preach a sermon against the Jewish "ideal" of martyrdom (*Kiddush hashem*) and in praise of some "new Jew," a glorious cowboy-white knight, who knows how to shoot up the world and "make history."<sup>6</sup> Part of the irony is that Yudke, the prophet of the new Jew, chooses to bring about this transvaluation by giving a sermon, like the old Jew that he is at heart. Hazzaz seems to be suggesting that this revolution cannot be brought off. But, more to the point here, is whether Yudke is right. Do the Jews love to die? Again the classical sources do not support such an attitude. One is *permitted* to undergo martyrdom only for a very few causes.<sup>7</sup> One is certainly not encouraged to seek it. But historical circumstances have a way of altering philosophy. The Jewish ideal was a life lived well. Jewish reality, especially in medieval times in both Christian and Arab countries, was the omnipresent threat of violent death. One way in which Jews adjusted their beliefs to their situation was through a kind of self-deprecating gallows

5. Her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York, 1963), contains a very unsympathetic portrait of the Jewish leaders in Nazi-held Europe. She accuses them of complicity in the destruction of the Jews.

6. Haim Hazzaz, "The Sermon," in Joel Blocker, ed., *Israeli Stories* (New York, 1962), pp. 65–86.

7. See Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 74a and other places.

humor.<sup>8</sup> Another was to make a virtue of their unfortunate situation. But Yudke, for all that, is off the mark. There is little evidence either in the historical record or in the theological texts that, given the choice, Jews preferred death to life. The ease with which they have become soldiers in Israel, in the West and, indeed, in the Red Army as well, suggests that the ideal of martyrdom was never more than a passing, perverse attempt to find comfort in a situation that could not be altered.

## II

But what of that other caricature of Jewish attitudes to war and violence? How has it happened that the lamb, led meekly to the slaughter just over a quarter century ago, has become the wolf? The answer is probably very complex, but some stages in the transformation seem to be clear. There is, first of all, the historical reality. Almost from the minute that Jews began to return to Palestine to resettle the land in the 1880's, they were embattled with the Arabs, now more, now less, aroused. As a state, Israel has fought four major wars in 25 years. Each time she has overwhelmed a numerically superior enemy. Israel remains embattled today, often appearing in the headlines, either because of acts of terrorism of which she is the victim, or acts of reprisal for them, which her detractors see as counter-terrorism. War and violence, then, have been part of the Israeli scene from the beginning, and it is not so surprising that they should be translated into a warlike image. Outsiders find it hard to believe the truth: that Israel has remained startlingly democratic and peace-loving, despite the temptations.

But there is more to this caricature of bellicosity. Hazzaz's Yudke, although he may have been attacking a paper tiger, speaks for a generation of Jews who had come to believe that there was, indeed, a perverse Jewish ideal of martyrdom. They further believed that if Jews were to survive in the modern world with any self-respect, for that matter if they were to survive at all, then that ideal had to be supplanted.<sup>9</sup> Even though such an ideal is neither historically nor theologically justifiable, many Jews thought it was and set about remaking themselves and their image as if it were. Thus, Israelis have frequently sought to project the image of tough, self-reliant, even unfeeling woodenness, of people who glory in the exploits of warriors, in feats of derring-do. There seems to be almost a fear of human warmth, of sensitivity.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps without such a mask it would not have been possible to build a state from nothing in the face of almost universal hostility. But Israelis also

8. Compare Ruth R. Wisse, *The Schlemiehl as Modern Hero* (Chicago, 1971).

9. In *The Israelis, Founders and Sons* (New York, 1971), Amos Elon has a very lucid discussion of this point.

10. Compare Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, "What Are the Sabras Afraid of?" *Orot*, III: 37-42.

know that this toughness is a mask. A sabra may be prickly, dry and forbidding on the outside, but inside it is a colorful, soft, delicious fruit. Yudke talks big! But he is still Yudke, the little Jew, who sermonizes like a rabbi. In the course of his sermon he even manages, willy-nilly, to show that in some ways the Zionist experiment of creating a "new Jew" was really an adventure in self-hating assimilationism after the manner of Diaspora Judaism. Still, for many Diaspora Jews and even non-Jews, and for many Israelis as well, (Can one say, "the less sensitive, the less self-critical ones"?) the new Jew seemed a desirable goal.

In North America, this image of the Jewish cowboy was received with rather more enthusiasm than it was in Israel. For, after all, the Israeli cowboy actually had to face the Indians, who sometimes exacted a bloody toll in going down to defeat. He knew death. The North American had only to cheer him on and send the funds for new horses and rifles. Thus, North American fiction has tended to glorify this new Israeli Jew, this non-Jewish Jew, this cowboy, in a number of extraordinarily popular works. The best seller of them has been Leon Uris' middle-Eastern Western, *Exodus*.<sup>11</sup> Its hero, Ari ben Canaan, (Aryan, son of Canaan, people of nature, sensuality and adventure, rather than Israel, people of books and morality) is as wooden as the worst John Wayne character. He kills all of the Arabs (read, "Indians"), who are either evil or incorrigibly misled, falls in love with a *shikse*, and rides happily off into the sunset. Uris has transformed the Israeli War of Independence into a saga of the American Wild West and, in so doing, has sold a great many books.

The question is why such an image should have captured North American (and other) audiences so easily. Perhaps the most obvious explanation is that Uris is a talented and spectacular writer, albeit a very shallow and crude one. Had he written the story with another setting it would probably have sold just as well. But, aside from Uris' peculiar talents, the time in which the book appeared also had a great deal to do with its success. The 40's and 50's were strange decades. The world felt guilty about what had happened to the Jews in the Holocaust. Perhaps the UN vote to establish a Jewish state in Palestine would not have been favorable had that sense of guilt not existed. There was something reassuring, then, in reading about those same Jews, so recently the victims of the West's ultimate barbarity, successfully resurgent. The Jews, themselves, could welcome such a new image. The Holocaust might well have been an emotional disaster from which the survivors could not recover. Their fellows totally degraded, dehumanized for no sin other than having Jewish blood, abandoned by man and God, the survivors might

11. My thanks to my colleague, Prof. Elaine Newton, for the phrase, "middle-eastern Western."

well have turned from Judaism and disappeared like the "lost ten tribes" before them. But here was a new Jew, not helpless, not over-schooled, not weeping, not suffering, not even sensitive or particularly feeling. It was an understandably attractive vision, given the times.

There was at least one additional factor operative in propelling the *Exodus* image to its preeminence. Israel provided the North American Jew with something he lacked, if he were to be like other Americans: his own "old country." Unlike other ethnic groups in America, the Jews could not relate with fondness and sentimentality to their European past. The poverty and oppression of Russia and Roumania from which they had come were too real. The position of the Jews in those countries had been too inglorious. Other Americans had their Italy, their Ireland, their England and Germany. The Jews had no past until Israel. In a sense, then, Israel was a means for making American Jews more American. And the more the old country seemed to be like the American experience itself, full of cowboys and Indians fighting it out on the frontier, the easier it would become for American Jews to make themselves understood to their neighbors, the better for their self-respect.

For all of these reasons, and probably for others as well, the image of Ari ben Canaan has become the definitive North American image of the Israeli. Unfortunately, it has been only a short step from this portrait to that of the Jew as militarist, terrorist, Nazi. This step came in the late 60's and early 70's, when Sitting Bull—and not Custer—was the American hero. The fundamental untruth of the image makes its acceptance all the more saddening.

### III

Passivity and bellicosity, then, are both inauthentic Jewish stances towards war and violence. Contemporary popular representations of these Jewish attitudes are caricatures, often self-serving. Where, then, can one find the main-stream Jewish attitudes and what are they?

Certainly both violence and war are permitted by Judaism. Self-defence is an obligation.<sup>12</sup> When one must choose between his own life and that of another, with few exceptions he is enjoined to choose himself.<sup>13</sup> If one chooses to martyr himself, he may be considered praiseworthy, but martyrdom is not to be sought. For the nation, also, self-anni-

12. See Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 72a and *Yoma* 85b.

13. See Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 62a. Two men on a desert trek, finding themselves with a canteen containing enough water for only one of them to reach a settled area alive, are not supposed to share the water and die together. Moreover, whichever of them is holding the canteen should drink of it. He is not to martyr himself by giving it to his companion. One life lost is preferable to two; and only God can make life and death decisions. Had He wanted the second man to live, He would have provided the water. This seems to be the assumption underlying the decision.



hilation is not even desirable. War is *permitted*. Certain kinds of war are even incumbent upon the Jewish nation: the God-commanded wars against the Biblical Amalekites and Canaanites and, as well, war to rescue one's fellows suffering from oppression. Other types of war are permitted, even "imperialistic" war.<sup>14</sup> Judaism is intended as a system of viable *reapolitik* as well as of ideals. A lofty withdrawal from the world is not to be countenanced.<sup>15</sup>

What is crucial, however, is the nation's conduct during wartime and the individual's attitude to the violence in which he is forced to engage. The classical understanding of permissible war and violence seems to be one of "adequate response." One is permitted to kill in self-defence. But one must be absolutely certain that his attacker has murderous intent. One who kills an attacker, when he might have held him off by other means, is responsible for taking a human life.<sup>16</sup> In going to war the nation must abide by many restrictions designed to make that war as humane as possible for both friend and enemy. To embark on a war of conquest, the ruler must have the permission of the Sanhedrin, the assembly. War is a sentence of death, not only for the enemy but for one's own forces as well. Therefore, according to the classical Jewish law,<sup>17</sup> it can be begun only with the permission of the full Sanhedrin, the court of ultimate responsibility in questions of life and death. Contrary to Biblical law, Maimonides maintained that the nation must be prepared to make peace with any enemy at all, even the hated Canaanites, whose extermination is demanded in the Torah. Any nation willing to submit to the law of God cannot be fought, says Maimonides.<sup>18</sup> The restrictions placed upon the army or upon the individual called upon to defend himself are designed to prevent any needless violence. Violence is evil, it brutalizes everyone who engages in it. One must do what one must do in order to stay alive, but no more.

Even more telling is what the rabbis had to say about the attitude of the Jew to war, to violence, to killing. A midrash states that when the Israelites fled Egypt, the Red Sea opened before them and then closed behind them, drowning the pursuing armies of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Upon seeing the demise of the wicked Egyptians, the angels in heaven began to sing and rejoice, until they were rebuked by God Himself. "How can you sing and rejoice," He stormed, "when my creatures are

14. While the term "imperialism" is anachronistic, Maimonides' description of such wars, as those whose purpose is "increasing the territory, glory and fame" of the king and nation, comes very close to our idea of imperialism. (See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Melakhim*, ch. 5, law 1.)

15. For a summary of the rules of war incumbent on a Jewish ruler of a Jewish state, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Melakhim*, passim.

16. See Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 72a, 72b.

17. Maimonides, *loc. cit.*, ch. 5, law 2.

18. *Ibid.*, ch. 6, laws 1-2.

drowning in the sea?" The Egyptians had to die; they were incorrigibly evil; they stood for the persecution of the innocent. But they, too, were human beings, made in God's image. One must sometimes kill in order that the righteous live. But one may never rejoice in killing even a wicked enemy.<sup>19</sup> Thus, at the Passover Seder, when reciting the plagues that devastated those same Egyptians, Jews today dip wine out of their cup, that their measure of happiness achieved through the necessary destruction of human life be not full. And so, too, the full Hallel prayer of praise of God is not recited on the seventh day of Passover, the day on which the Egyptians are said to have drowned.

#### IV

The caricature of the unfeeling Israeli cowboy fighter notwithstanding, it is in Israeli fiction that one finds today the most frequent and eloquent expression of this main-stream Jewish attitude to war and violence.<sup>20</sup> It is striking how much war fiction written by Israelis reflects such an attitude, considering the alleged popularity of Yudke's views in Israel and the unquestioned popularity of *Exodus* and its like in the Diaspora. It is no less than startling how negative the picture of war has been.<sup>21</sup> Despite the real-life uncompromising, aggressive stance of the "Whole Israel Movement," which seeks to retain for Israel all of the territory conquered in the 1967 war, and despite the uncompromising behavior of that transplanted American rabbi, Meir Kahane, and his Jewish Defence League thugs, Israelis in their fiction sounded very different.

The allegation has been made that in this age of plenty and of unrelenting new and old leftist propaganda Israelis have gone soft, that peace sentiment and hatred of war represent either an overreaction to the Yom Kippur War or a loss of confidence in Israeli virtuousness, the influence of fuzzy-headed Western intellectuals.<sup>22</sup> But, in fact, Israeli fiction has almost always exhibited a strong sense of the tragedy of war and of its brutalizing effects. In his World War II story, "Dr. Schmidt,"<sup>23</sup> Moshe Shamir displays an awareness of the all-pervasive destructiveness of violence. In the background is the war in Europe, in which the doctor's son is eventually to take part. But the poisons of hatred released

19. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 39b and other places.

20. All of the references to contemporary Israeli literature, except where noted, are to representative works which have appeared in English translation.

21. It is at this writing too soon to tell whether the post-Yom Kippur War literature will be any different, but the writers of the post-1956 and post-1967 periods maintained the tradition established by the earlier generation. See, for example, several of the stories in Dalia Rabikovit, ed., *The New Israeli Writers* (New York, 1969).

22. In Sholom J. Kahn, ed., *A Whole Loaf* (New York, 1963), pp. 31-46.

23. See, for example, Erich and Rael Jean Isaac, "Israel's Dissenting Intellectuals," *Conservative Judaism* (Spring, 1972): 3-20.

by that war have penetrated every corner of human existence. In Palestine there is war between Arab and Jew. In the Jewish community there is discord between Western Jew and Oriental. In the family there is trouble between the Schmidts and their son. A world of violence is a sick world, and Shamir depicts diseases paralleling the violence. The doctor's wife has for some time been ill, perhaps fatally. In Palestine there is an outbreak of hoof and mouth disease. The measures taken to combat the plague, quarantine and the killing of infected animals, serve only to heighten the barriers between Arab and Jew and among the Jews themselves. The plague is not indigenous to Palestine, it has come from the world outside, from Africa, where there is also disease. But the world's disease seems to be mostly a moral one: hatred and war. In this story, then, Shamir, now an advocate of no compromise with the Arabs and a member of the "Whole Israel Movement," saw war and violence as debilitating diseases, destroying all who came in contact with them.

A similar understanding is portrayed in "The Party,"<sup>24</sup> Aharon Meged's story of the 1948 War of Independence. The party is a gathering of pre-war friends to honor Yair Meirowitz, recently promoted to quartermaster. But it is no happy celebration. One of the group had been a shirker during the war. Their teacher has lost his son, and the presence of the grieving man embarrasses everyone. The protagonist of the story lost a leg in the war. An embittered cripple, he despairs of the uselessness of all of the suffering. He is, in fact, an emotional cripple. He cannot relate to his friends nor they to him. His girl-friend deserts him. Here, too, war is a game that maims the bodies and the souls of those who play and of those who know the players.

Such a critique set around the War of Independence might seem odd to Americans weaned on Uris. To many that was the most clear-cut of Israel's wars. Three years after the Holocaust, few people in the world, except Arabs, were not in sympathy with the Israelis. Overwhelmingly outnumbered and out-gunned by an enemy that promised to finish Hitler's work, the Israelis were natural recipients of support and sympathy, and their miraculous victory was one that they themselves could not but be proud of. Moreover, in the post-1948 era, with the tasks of nation-building almost totally preoccupying them, and the Arab refugees tucked out of sight in the ghettos conveniently imposed upon them by their own Arab brethren, it was easy, as well as natural, for Israelis to flex their muscles in pride and even contempt, to look back upon the War of Independence as a moment of unadulterated glory. The fictional account, however, as Meged's story and others show, reveals an attitude very different indeed.

The representative spokesman and the great chronicler of this pe-

24. In Kahn, *Op. cit.*, pp. 103-123.

riod is S. Yizhar. His long, stream-of-consciousness novel, *The Days of Ziklag*, considered to be the most important piece of fiction dealing with the War of Independence, is unfortunately not accessible to any but readers of Hebrew.<sup>25</sup> But his short story, "The Prisoner," has appeared in English<sup>26</sup> and affords a glimpse at Yizhar's vision of that war and, indeed, of war in general. Incidentally, this anti-war story was distributed to many Israeli army units by their commanders as required reading in the days just before the outbreak of the 1967 battle.

The prisoner is an Arab captured by an Israeli patrol during the War of Independence. He is interrogated about the possible presence of Egyptian infiltrators in his village. He gives no information, probably has none to give. At the end of the story he is being transferred to an indefinite location and has an uncertain future. The story, however, is more that of the captors than it is of the captive. The Jews turn on their prisoner in quite the same manner in which they have been persecuted for generations, most recently during the Nazi period. They kick the Arab. "He is used to blows." They are enraged when he requests a cigarette. For them he has been dehumanized. Animals do not smoke! They assume that anything he says is a lie. Arabs lie!

Are these the understandable excesses of people just coming into their own after much suffering? Are these soldiers the dregs of Israeli society? In fact, they have not suffered any more than most men, and they are as educated and as moral as any cross-section of humanity. They are everyman and any man caught up in the brutalizing process of war, some good-natured, some not, some highly moral, some not, some well-schooled, some not. But, all alike act the beast towards the defenceless Arab prisoner.<sup>27</sup> Yizhar seems to be saying that anyone who engages in violence is destroyed, even when he fights for right, even when he fights for his own survival.

Professor Ernst Simon, the great Israeli thinker and educator, has suggested that, in "The Prisoner," the failure of the driver to release the Arab when he has a chance is a failure of courage, representative of an understanding of life that links morality with weakness.<sup>28</sup> The driver is a disciple of Yudke. But war has a Greek-tragic aspect, as is pointed out by novelist critic, Yoram Kaniuk.<sup>29</sup> By its very nature war sows doubt; it creates situations which defy a moral solution; its in-

25. A discussion of the book and the reception which it received from the Israeli public can be found in Robert Alter, *After the Tradition* (New York, 1971), pp. 210-225.

26. In Blocker, *Op. cit.*, pp. 151-174, and Rabikovitz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 107-128.

27. S. Yizhar, "The Prisoner," in Blocker, *Op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

28. "The Good and the Weak in Modern Hebrew Literature," in Israel Cohen and B. Y. Michali, eds., *An Anthology of Hebrew Essays*, vol. 2, pp. 324-341.

29. "The Plastic Flower Children," in *Life Special Report, The Spirit of Israel* (New York, 1973), pp. 76-77.

herent dangers impede deeds of kindness. Perhaps the simple Arab shepherd really does know something. Perhaps like the real-life Arab shepherd, who betrayed the 35 Israeli soldiers who released him on his word, when he discovered them on a relief patrol to their surrounded compatriots, this shepherd, too, will become the instrument of death for those who show kindness towards him. War brutalizes everyone and defeats everyone. And yet it must be embarked upon when occasion warrants, albeit with sorrow and hesitation, and with stringent limitations.

Yizhar, with his vision of the destructiveness of war, is no fuzzy-headed intellectual. A member of the Israeli political establishment, he has been a member of the Knesset from the ruling Mapai and its successor, the Labor Party. His vision, if perhaps more sharply drawn than that of some other authors, is really exceptional only for its representativeness. This is so despite the chilly reception which *The Days of Ziklag* received when it was first published.<sup>30</sup> His writings, like those of Nathan Shaham, Hanoch Bartov, Aharon Meged, Yehuda Amichai and others, reflect that authentic Jewish recognition of what must be done to survive, coupled with a profound regret at what one has to do, and a consciousness of what the cost will be for all involved.

## V

The main-stream Jewish approach to war and violence then, is not a simple one with absolute answers. One may engage in both; at times one must. But there is a price to be paid in terms of one's own humanity as well as the enemy's life. Therefore, severe restrictions regarding not only action, but, also, attitude, are placed upon the fighting Jew. In saving his own life, he must not succumb to the beast whom he fights. The ideal of peace must be present, no matter how bloody the reality. If Jewish attitudes to war and violence have often been caricatured as simple extremes, in the corpus of modern Israeli fiction as well as in the classical sources, there can be found a more accurate and, to the mind of this writer, a more noble and mature vision.

---

30. See Alter, *loc. cit.*

# The Sh'ma Reconsidered

HERMAN L. HOROWITZ

THOUGH ITS IMPORTANCE IS UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED, the exact purpose of the liturgical unit that we call the *sh'ma* (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21 and Num. 15:37-41) still remains unclear. Ancient and medieval sources usually explain it as *kabbalat ol malkhut shammayim*, "the acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of God." Modern explanations, however, attempt conceptual interpretations. "... the purpose of the whole section is to clarify the idea of God."<sup>1</sup>

The two views are clearly incompatible. "The acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of God" aims to establish a relationship and certainly cannot serve as "... a descriptive definition of the nature of God."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, however, modern scholarship can provide us with a structural analysis of the *sh'ma* unit which can lead us to a clearer understanding of its purpose.

The researches of a growing number of scholars have shed abundant light on treaties of the ancient Near East.<sup>3</sup> From the 19th to the 7th century B.C.E., there were treaties formulated<sup>4</sup> whose pattern has been discerned and the component parts analyzed in, among others, the near-classic studies of Viktor Korovec<sup>5</sup> and George E. Mendenhall.<sup>6</sup> Some of the structural elements most common to such treaties are:

1) a declaration and introduction describing the historic reasons for the treaty—usually the prior benevolence of the suzerain or Great King toward his vassal, in return for which undivided loyalty is expected;

2) a series of stipulations which govern the deeds of the parties who have established the treaty relationship between them;

3) the identification of the Great King, either in his own name or through a third party who imposes an oath on the vassal in behalf of the king;

---

1. S. Freehof, *The Small Sanctuary* (Cincinnati: 1942), p. 62. See, most recently, A. Milgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: 1971), pp. 96-101 and the extensive bibliography.

2. E. Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (New York: 1963), p. 5.

3. For bibliography, see O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. P. Ackroyd (New York: 1965), pp. 19-21, 723-4; D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Rome: 1963).

4. H. B. Huffman, "Exodus, Sinai and the Credo," in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965): 104.

5. *Hethitische Staatsverträge* (Leipzig: 1931).

6. "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," in *Biblical Archaeologist Reader* 3 (Garden City: 1970), pp. 25-53. See, also, Mendenhall's summary article "Covenant," in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: 1962), Vol. I, pp. 714-722 and M. Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy, The Present State of Inquiry," in *The Journal of Biblical Literature* (1967): 249-262.

4) the invocation of a threat or curse against the party to the treaty who breaches the agreement;

5) the names of the witnesses to the treaty; and

6) provisions for a periodic recital of the treaty.

In the actual treaty texts, there appears to be a general pattern of these elements, even though there may be considerable variations in the order.

In the *sh'ma*, the first two passages, drawn from Deuteronomy, show unmistakable signs that the above treaty elements had been used to structure the Covenant between God and Israel. Moses, the emissary of the Great King, imposes a Covenant upon Israel, God's vassal.

1) The opening statement (*sh'ma yisrael . . .* Deut. 6:4) proclaims for the nation, and identifies for it, the Great King to whom it must direct its undivided loyalty.

2) The succeeding verses (*v'ahavtah . . .* Deut. 6:5-9) list the stipulations through which Israel will demonstrate its all-embracing loyalty.

3) The following verses (Deut. 11:13-17) describe not only the threat of suffering which disloyalty causes, but, also, the abundant reward for faithfulness to the Covenant.

4) The third paragraph (Num. 15:37-41) satisfies the need for witnesses to the Covenant. This passage, already an integral part of the *sh'ma* unit in the Second Temple times,<sup>7</sup> refers to *zizit* to be worn on the corners of the garment as constant visible reminders of the will of the Divine Great King. The passage thus explains<sup>8</sup> the function of the obscure *g'dilim*, "tassels," in Deuteronomy 22:11-12. In ancient Babylonian practice, *zizit* could serve as a substitute for the personal witnessing seal of a contracting party in a covenant. In wearing the *zizit*, the Israelite attaches to his attire a sign of witness so that he, the individual, lives under a constant reminder to himself to play the role of co-guarantor of the Covenant as a participating party.

5) The conclusion of the paragraph from Numbers provides the reference to historic events on which the Covenant is established. As a Great King would review benevolence bestowed upon the vassal, Israel's suzerain recalls the faithfulness He has shown in the historic exodus from Egypt. In turn, as a reward for its loyalty, Israel will enjoy a special status (*k'doshim*, "holy," Num. 15:30), perhaps a reference to its role as God's priesthood.<sup>9</sup> *Zizit*-like tassels, previously worn only by the upper classes as a sign of distinction, now indicate the special role played

7. Mishnah *Tamid* 5:1, and the discussion of E. Levi, *Y'sodot Hat'filah* (Jerusalem: 5712), pp. 138-143.

8. On the connection between *zizit* and *g'dilim*, see *Encyclopedia Mikra'it*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: 5714), art. *g'dilim*; vol. 6, art. *tzitzit*; and F. J. Stevens, "The Ancient Significance of *Si'ith*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 50 (1931): 50-70.

9. As in the expression *s'gullah* ("a precious possession") in Ex. 19:4. Cf. M. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 195.



by the individual Israelite, regardless of class, due to the Covenant with God. In the last verse of the same concluding paragraph the Divine suzerain identifies Himself emphatically (*ani adonay elohekkhem*, "I, the Lord, am your God" Num. 15:31) in a manner reminiscent of the expressions at the beginning of many treaties. Here the identification may serve the purpose of a signature or of a personal seal on a document. Such a pronouncement would bring the *sh'ma* to a fitting close.<sup>10</sup>

Following the centralization of sacrificial worship, toward the end of the 7th Century B.C.E. under King Josiah, the priestly-conservative belief that the Jerusalem sanctuary was the actual dwelling-place of God was recast into a belief that God's *name* dwelt in the Sanctuary but that He actually dwelt everywhere. In the redefinition by the school of thought generally associated with the book of Deuteronomy, the Ark was no longer looked upon, as in previous periods, as the seat of the Divinity, but as a repository for the Tablets of the Covenant. As a consequence, the deeds of each Judean gained profound added importance, since the responsibility for the Covenant now lay, in far greater measure, with the individual. This anthropocentric view, reflected in the book of Deuteronomy, undoubtedly aimed to emphasize the involvement of each Judean in maintaining the Covenant. Through personal pious deeds the *sh'ma* unit gave the individual the opportunity to fulfill this responsibility. In the first two paragraphs of the *sh'ma*, tefillin and mezuzah are each mentioned twice. In the new theological mood, both practices could serve as personal expressions of loyalty to the Covenant, on one's person as well as on one's dwelling. In order to reinforce and climax this process of individualization, the *zizit* paragraph from Numbers was attached to provide for every Judean an even more prominent personal symbol of covenant acceptance which heretofore had been known largely

10. If the structure of the *sh'ma* reveals ancient Near Eastern treaty characteristics, so does terminology. Recent research has demonstrated that *sh'ma* often speaks in the terminology of international relationships which aims to bind the vassal to his Sovereign in individual loyalty. To "love" the suzerain is to serve him exclusively and to remain faithful to him forever. Thus, love for the Divine Suzerain is pledged in the Covenant, defined by it, and, since it requires specific regular deeds, is regulated, understandably, by a juridical framework. To serve the suzerain *b'khol l'vav'khah* means to be wholehearted and sincere in the relationship without entertaining any thoughts of treasonous rebellion or abrogation of the treaty. If the need arises, the vassal must be prepared to serve the Great King *b'khol nafsh'khah*, at the price of his life. Ancient treaty vocabulary, when appropriated in Deuteronomy for Covenant purposes, can lead us safely to a paraphrase of Deut. 6:4-5 along the following lines:

"Listen closely, Israel! The Lord is our God, and *only* the Lord. Serve Him lovingly, with total allegiance, wholeheartedly and with unchanging faithfulness, even with your very life and with every form of power at your command."

This paraphrase is supported by the fact that love and hatred are evidently parallel also to loyalty and rebellion, as in Exodus 20:6. Cf. also the "love" for David in I Sam. 18:16. W. L. Moran, "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 25 (1963): 77-87. M. Weinfeld, "*Hab'rit v'hahesed*," *L'shonenu*, 36, 2-3 (5732): 85-105.

among elite or royalty of the ancient Near East. Now, more than ever, the ancient *national* covenant could find valid and forceful expression in *personal* acts of consecration not connected with the priestly-controlled worship in the Jerusalem Sanctuary. This idea may have gained a considerable following during the decades immediately succeeding the outstanding event of the Deuteronomic reform, viz, the promulgation of the Torah-Book usually identified with the forerunner of our present Book of Deuteronomy. But the greatest influence of this idea must have been felt during the Babylonian exile following the destruction of the Temple in 587 B.C.E. The emphasis on the Covenant, despite the ruin of Temple cult and nationhood, offered to the exile from Judea a personal framework of continuity and hope and, through it, an assurance for renewal of the national covenant.

The ancient forms for suzerainty treaties were in use until approximately the seventh century B.C.E.<sup>11</sup> It is reasonable to allow approximately a century to elapse before ancient practices, disturbed by upheaval, would cease to function and would be forgotten. Perhaps it was only because it had struck such deep roots into Jewish spiritual soil in the Exile that the *sh'ma* unit, a product of a particular ideological school, could be incorporated into the reconstituted cult in the rebuilt Jerusalem Temple, despite the obvious prominence of the conservative priesthood who would otherwise oppose such an addition. Indeed, the elements preserved in the *sh'ma* unit must have lost their original treaty significance as the sixth century drew to a close. But, as loyalty-affirming liturgy for priest and peasant alike, firmly established as a normative practice, it would not be challenged. In addition, it was perhaps shortly before the awareness of the suzerainty elements in the *sh'ma* faded that a new statement further affirming the inviolability of the Covenant as promulgated in the *sh'ma* was introduced. Though in its present form it might appear to be a non-Scriptural formula, *barukh shem k'vod mal'khuto l'olam va-ed* "praised be the name (reputation) of His glorious reign to eternity," simply summarizes the suzerainty theme. The addition of the word *mal'khuto* ("His sovereignty") to the Biblical phrase, "And praised be His glorious Name forever" (Ps.72:18) could easily reflect the emphasis on the reality of Divine kingship which this age enunciated as a response to the destruction of Temple, nationhood and earthly *national* throne. It is the especially-emphatic diction of a loyal vassal. This formula, too, was preserved for centuries, probably after having gained acceptance together with the *sh'ma* unit. The question of this formula representing a non-Scriptural intrusion apparently arose only later, when neither established Temple practice nor awareness of treaty usage could provide clear justification. The descriptive phrase, *kabbalat ol malkhut*

11. See above, note 4.

*shamayim* "affirmation of the yoke<sup>12</sup> of Divine suzerainty" may also date from this period and was also employed to summarize the Covenant-affirming purpose of the *sh'ma*.

The gesture of taking the *zizit* in hand during the recitation of the *sh'ma* probably became firmly established very early as natural accompaniment to the words. As a non-verbal ritual reminiscent of ancient loyalty-affirmation ceremonies, it would tend to persist even though the original suzerainty meaning of the verbal *sh'ma* might become unclear.<sup>13</sup> It recalls an old Babylonian practice which expressed loyalty. The Judean could quite naturally appropriate this gesture as an aid in expressing the mood of the *sh'ma* of the Deuteronomic school. Indeed, it remained as an established gesture of personal piety and was called into question only in the Middle Ages but was never permanently discontinued.<sup>14</sup>

Even the name describing the activity connected to the *sh'ma* reveals ancient treaty practices. The expression *kriat sh'ma*, "the reading of the *sh'ma*," can be understood as recalling the ancient requirement of periodic recital of a treaty. The Book of Deuteronomy does make specific provision for the reading of the Torah every seven years so as to impress covenant responsibilities upon succeeding generations (31:10-13). The Deuteronomic individualizing impetus could well have created the need to increase the frequency of review of the covenant text, not only as a communal experience but, especially, as expressed in personal piety. When the *sh'ma* unit became the vehicle for the Judean's personal expression of loyalty, he could base the innovation of a daily recitation on a literal interpretation of *b'shokh'b'khah uv'kumekkah* "upon lying down and rising up" (Deut. 6:7; 11:19). Even the simplest Judean could now rehearse daily his fervent loyalty to the covenant with God, thus assuring both his and his people's acceptability to their Divine sponsor in history.

It would appear from the above discussion that the modern conceptual explanation of the purpose of the *sh'ma* is an unfortunate digression. The *sh'ma* really aims to establish and renew, periodically, a powerful and all-pervading bond between Israel and God. This bond is based on the reality of Jewish historic experience and requires undivided loyalty. Commitment to this relationship calls for a pattern of personal and national life to illustrate this loyalty dramatically. The basic motivation of the life of the Jew deals neither with meditation nor speculation but, rather, with the eternally-valid bond between two vivid realities: himself and his God. And just as he and his people are real, so—without the intervention of analytic thought—his God is real, however one may deal subsequently in conceptualizations. In reverse, to the extent

12. The phrase itself is reminiscent of the diction employed in the treaties of Ashurbanipal of Assyria (7th Century, B.C.E.).

13. F. J. Stephens, *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

14. E. Levi, *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

that the Jew is capable of accepting the all-pervading supremacy of God in his life, he, in turn, becomes real in history. A relationship based on a commitment exudes power, demands sanctity and endows ethics with lasting force where ethics, as in Israelite religion, is among the requirements of the relationship. No such power and influence can be expected from meditation or from definitional thought. Especially in our confused contemporary search for genuine reality, we can state with assurance that the attempts to understand Jewish life through definitions rather than through committed relationships have brought us to tottering on the edge of total unreality. As satisfying and as intellectually necessary as conceptual thinking may be, recent experience has proved that it cannot provide the foundation for the existence of the Jewish people but can only aid in refining a previously-established allegiance. The ancient vassal may have entered into a treaty with his suzerain out of either fear or practical necessity. But *am yisra-el*, to be real in history, can stand before God, in an eternal, committed covenant relationship with love, awe, exultation and a grateful sense of destiny. The explorer of the "idea of God," if he is engaged in more than an intellectual exercise, must first establish his status as a devotee of God. If the *sh'ma* could again be understood for its original purpose of clarifying the covenant underpinning of Jewish life, then, perhaps, the joy derived from cosmic commitment could be restored to Jewish life.

In the name of historic accuracy as well as to provide a cosmic anchor, the *sh'ma* should be taught and appreciated as, in truth, it always should have been: *kabbalat ol malkhut shammayim*. Responsibly and lovingly, the Jew, in reverence and gratitude, accepts the burden and the blessing of the will of his Creator, the Holy One, praised be He.

# *The Jews of Cochin*

MATTHEW D. SLATER

And King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom . . . And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon (1 Kings 9:26,28).

## *Origins*

WERE OPHIR AND TARSHISH THE ONLY PORTS reached by King Solomon's fleet, and were these the only items imported? Perhaps not. It is not too far-fetched to think that the fleet may have reached as far as India in search of wood for the Temple and the king's palace, for precious jewels and other decorative items for both of them, and for the many spices grown there. Enthralled by exotic India, some of the sailors in the fleet might possibly have remained there. These men could have converted native women to Judaism, and perhaps in such a manner a Jewish community was begun in India.

The origin, or even existence, of a Jewish community in India is slightly noted, if at all, in both Jewish and Indian histories.<sup>1</sup> In fact, there are really two Jewish groups in India which trace their origins to antiquity. One is centered in Cochin in the State of Kerala on India's southwest coast. The other, known as the Bene Israel,<sup>2</sup> presently centered in Bombay, previously existed in small towns and villages along inland waterways south of Bombay. The two communities functioned independently of, and, for most of their existences, also oblivious of, one another and developed in two distinctively different ways. Both groups have interesting histories, although that of the Bene Israel is the less known of the two. This paper will discuss the course of the Cochin community.

The specific date of the arrival of Jews in Cochin is not known.<sup>3</sup> Actually, "Cochin" is a misnomer when speaking of this period, for it is virtually uncontested that the site of the original Jewish settlement was Cranganore, a city about 20 miles north of Cochin.<sup>4</sup> The Malabar coast was, and remains, the major spice producing area in India. Cranganore was the major seaport of the coast and the only Indian port

1. Gilbert Kushner, *Immigrants From India in Israel* (Tucson: U. of Arizona Press, 1972), p. 12.

2. Solomon Grayzel, *A History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1950), pp. 740-744.

3. S. S. Koder, *History of the Jews of Kerala* (Cochin, 1969), p. 3; Shellim Samuel, "The Jews of Maharashtra and Kerala," *Indian Jewish Yearbook 1969*, (Bombay, 1969), p. 55; Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 12.

4. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 12.

---

MATTHEW D. SLATER is a student at Harvard University.

known to the outside world, which explains why there were settlements<sup>5</sup> there. The earliest period suggested as a possible arrival time is that of King Solomon, c. 973 B.C.E. This theory was related to me by a few of the Cochini now living in Israel whom I interviewed during the summer of 1974. It can also be found in some histories of the community. Merchant ships in the King's fleet often visited the Malabar coast (where Kerala is located) and the possibility of some of the sailors settling there has already been suggested.<sup>6</sup> Proponents of this theory point to the close resemblance of the words in Tamil (ancient language of the area) for the South Indian ape and peacock and their Hebrew equivalents in the Books of Kings and Chronicles as further evidence of the arrival of Jews during Solomon's times.<sup>7</sup> A Cochini informant said that a number of other such similarities exist. Another Cochini mentioned that there is a great abundance of peacocks in the Malabar area and that these could have been the source of the peacock feathers used to decorate Solomon's palace. He also claimed that the ivory used in the king's throne came from the Malabar.

Various people have also suggested the times surrounding the three ancient captivities in Judea as possible arrival times: 721 B.C.E. of the Northern Kingdom, or Israel, by the Assyrians; 586 B.C.E. of the Southern Kingdom, or Judah, by the Babylonians; and 70 C.E. of Judah by the Romans.<sup>8</sup> The rationale behind these opinions is that the times of the captivities were dangerous ones in Judea and people might, therefore, have been trying to escape the danger, if not the captivity itself. Also, at each of the captivities the entire population was not carried off and the settlers in Cochin might have been part of the remnant of the people who were left in the country; fearful of further repercussions, they may have left Judea for what they hoped to be a safer home. Many Cochini Jews support such an opinion, holding that ten thousand Jews came to Cranganore soon after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E.<sup>9</sup> Others have said that after the fall of the Assyrian empire in 605 B.C.E. some of the ten tribes, after having been freed, settled in Cranganore. The conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 B.C.E. may also have brought some freed Jews to Cranganore.<sup>10</sup>

The earliest date proposed with any degree of certainty is about 55

5. S. S. Koder, "Kerala and Her Jews," (A paper read before the Kerala History Convention, 18.5.65), *Jews in Asia*, v. 1-pamphlet, p. 1; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

6. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 12; Koder, *History*, p. 3.

7. Koder, "Kerala," p. 2; Koder, *History*, p. 3.

8. Walter J. Fischel, *Unknown Jews in Unknown Lands* (New York: Ktav, 1973), p. 114; Koder, *History*, p. 4; Koder, "Kerala," p. 2; Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 12; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

9. Koder, *History*, p. 4; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 55; Koder, "Kerala," p. 2.

10. Koder, *History*, p. 4.

C.E. In a Christian wedding song of Malabar, there is reference to a Jewish merchant named Habban, who is sent by Royal order to find a man to build a Temple more beautiful than King Solomon's, and who arrives with St. Thomas at Cranganore in 55 C.E. St. Thomas is received by a Jewish flute girl, he stays in the Jewish quarter with a Rabbi Paul and he succeeds in converting forty Jews.<sup>11</sup> A date with slightly more historical basis is proposed by K. Menon in *The History of Kerala*. He tells of a Roman merchant ship which travelled between Mayos Hermes on the Red Sea, Arabia, Ceylon, and the Malabar coast where a Jewish community was found in the second century C.E.<sup>12</sup>

In Moses Pereira de Paiva's report (which will be discussed later), written in 1686-1687, he states that, in 369 C.E., between seventy and eighty thousand Jews came to Cranganore from Myorca, and more followed in 490 C.E. These, he says, were descendants of captives of Titus Vespasianus, who had taken them there. Cecil Roth holds that the first Jews on the Malabar coast were refugees fleeing from persecution in Mesopotamia under the rule of Firuz in 486 and of King Kobad in 518 C.E.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps all of these theories are correct as periods of large scale immigration. All of them, except the first, provide excellent reasons for the settlers to have left their country of origin, but why should they have chosen India as their haven? A number of my Cochini informants suggested that once the original settlers came as traders in King Solomon's times, other Jews continued to trickle in. At the times of these various destructions and persecutions, then, it was known that there was a Jewish community in Cranganore, a safe one, and that there was profitable trade to be done there. The Cochini who told me this theory were unable to give me any corroborative evidence other than tradition and plausibility. However, one of them told me an interesting sign that the original settlement was in Cranganore. He asserted that the clothes of the Jewish women in Cochin are the same as those worn by the native women of Cranganore, rather than those of Cochin. In any case, there are proofs other than the Christian wedding song which indicate a Jewish settlement in the Malabar, and some of them follow.

It has been said that Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, who lived from about 264-340 C.E. mentioned that Pantanenus, of the Catechacal School of Alexandria, visited the Malabar coast around the end of the second century and brought home a Hebrew copy of the Gospel of Matthew. Further indication of an early settlement in Cranganore is a letter writ-

11. Koder, *History*, p. 4; Koder, "Kerala," p. 2.

12. Louis Rabinowitz, *Far East Mission* (Johannesburg: Eagle Press, Ltd., 1952), p. 96; Koder, *History*, p. 4; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 55; Koder, "Kerala," p. 2.

13. Koder, *History*, p. 4.



ten by St. Jerome to Dardanus, in the fourth century, mentioning the existence of Jews on the Malabar coast. Of the same period, the Talmud mentions a Rabbi Judah, a Hindu convert to Judaism, who died in Babylon in the fourth century.<sup>14</sup>

*So Long as the World and the Moon Exist*

All of these theories are based, of course, on oral tradition or indirect proof and, though plausible, they are by no means conclusive. Of a more concrete nature are two copper plates held by the Jews of Cochin, written in the ancient Tamil language and obsolete Vattelutu script.<sup>15</sup> The date of the plates is a matter of controversy, ranging from 379 C.E., according to the Cochini, to 1020 C.E. which was put forth by some recent writers, such as D.G. Mandelbaum and Solomon Grayzel.<sup>16</sup> However, as Kushner says, the 1020 date was "given with apparently unwarranted confidence by Mandelbaum" and certainly goes unexplained. According to W. J. Fischel, most scholars fix their date at approximately 750 C.E.<sup>17</sup> On the plates is the text of a charter, granted to the Jews by the Ruler, Bhaskara Ravi Varma. In effect, the charter granted the principality of Anjuvannam to a Jewish "king," Joseph Rabban, and through him to all the Jews of Cranganore. The Jewish community was granted a number of privileges, among them freedom from taxation, numerous princely honors for Rabban, certain taxes, and the right to fire gun salutes at daybreak and during Jewish wedding feasts. The latter is especially significant since this privilege had always been, and indeed still is, reserved only for the Royal House, yet it was granted to the Jews, and to no other group. Rabban's rule was to be passed on from generation to generation "so long as the world and moon exist."<sup>18</sup> It seems that the Jews were in Cranganore for several centuries before the plates were given and during that time rose to political prominence, though exactly why they were given can only be guessed.<sup>19</sup> This Jewish "kingdom" became famous in European Jewry and even attracted visitors. The fourteenth century Hebrew poet and traveller, Rabbi Nissim, wrote "I travelled from Spain. / I had heard

14. Ibid.

15. David G. Mandelbaum, "The Jewish Way of Life in Cochin," *Jewish Social Studies*, I, 4 (1939): 425; Walter J. Fischel, "Exploration of the Jewish Antiquities of Cochin," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 87 (3): 230-231; Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 12; Koder, *History*, p. 5; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 54; Fischel, *Unknown Jews*, p. 113.

16. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 425; Grayzel, *A History*, p. 741.

17. Fischel, "Exploration of the Jewish Antiquities," p. 231n.

18. Koder, *History*, p. 5; Fischel, "Exploration," pp. 230-231; Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 12.

19. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 425-426, 438; Koder, *History*, pp. 5-6; Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 13.

of the city of Shingly. / I longed to see an Israel king. / Him I saw with my own eyes."<sup>20</sup>

Some of the rights granted to the Cochini in the charter are still implemented by those still living there, Cochini informants told me. Whether they are carried out as they originally were is not clear, but it is still interesting to note them. One of the rights was "'a lamp in day-time'"<sup>21</sup> or "'the lamp of the day.'"<sup>22</sup> My Cochini friends explain that ordinarily it was the right only of the king to be illuminated by a lamp during the daytime and that having such a lamp showed the person's dignity. Such a lamp was also used by the Hindus in front of the elephant carrying the image of Krishna of Vishnu in their religious processions. The Jews observed their right by leading the *hakofot* in the synagogue on Simḥat Torah with the lamp preceding the Torah. They also led the procession to the synagogue of a child to be circumcised, with this lamp. The child was also shaded by an umbrella covered by a silk shawl, like that which was used to shade the king, and pursuant to the Jewish right of "a parasol."<sup>23</sup> Some of the other rights are associated with the wedding ceremony. After the appropriate lustrations, the groom would begin walking to the synagogue. To announce his start, the Jews fired a kind of cannon. The Hindus started their religious processions in the same manner. The groom, as well as the bride, walked on white or red satin cloth spread before them on the public streets and were preceded by drum and trumpet players. The bride and groom both wore garlands to and from the *huppah*. These practices are in accordance with the rights of "'a cloth spread (in front to walk on) . . . a Vaduga (i.e. Teluga) drum, a large trumpet . . . [and] a garland.'"<sup>24</sup> All of these rites are otherwise signs of respect to, and rights of, the king.

The charter was not the only example of Hindu benevolence towards the Jews. In the early fourteenth century some of the Jews of Anjuvannam moved to Kochangadi (Cochin) and, in 1344, Joseph Azar, the seventy-second in the line of succession of Joseph Rabban, built the first synagogue outside of Cranganore there.<sup>25</sup> Others continued to trickle southward during the next two centuries. Finally, due to the devastation of their land by sword, fire, and flood, and internal political problems, the rest of the Jews moved to the Cochin area in 1565 (there were Jewish communities in four neighboring towns also).<sup>26</sup> At this time, as a

20. Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

21. Fischel, "Exploration," pp. 230-231.

22. Koder, *History*, p. 5.

23. Fischel, "Exploration," pp. 230-231.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Koder, *History*, p. 6; Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 13; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 56; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 427-428.

26. Koder, *History*, pp. 6-7; Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 13; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 56; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 430; Koder, "Kerala," p. 5; Walter J. Fischel, "Cochin

British writer said, " 'with a liberality that can be hardly understood,' "27 the Rajah of Cochin, Kesava Rama Varma, gave them a gift of some land next to his own palace to build a synagogue. He also gave them an area nearby in which to reside free of taxes. On these sites they built their community of "Jew Town" in 1567, and, in 1568, the Paradesi Synagogue, which still stands. Both grants were made in perpetuity and, in fact, as of 1952, the Jews in Jew Town still did not have to pay taxes. Cochini informants indicate that similar land grants were given in the four other towns also. In all of the towns the Jews lived on only one or two streets.<sup>28</sup>

### *The Long Arm of the Inquisition*

For a long time, the Jews in Anjuvannam lived in peace and prosperity. However, with conquests from the West came trouble. Numerous European countries vied for control of the spice trade in the area, and finally the Portuguese gained the upper hand. Their occupation of the Malabar area from 1500-1663 was a time of terror for the Jews, whose already shaky position vis-à-vis the Portuguese was aggravated by the large influx of Portuguese and Castilian Jews fleeing the horrors of the Inquisition.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Albuquerque, the Viceroy of India, wrote a letter in 1513 to the Portuguese king asking " 'whether I may be permitted to exterminate them one by one as I come across them.' "30 He then destroyed the already dilapidated settlement of Anjuvannam. Then, in 1545, St. Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit missionary to India, wrote to the king begging him to be allowed to set up an Inquisition in India because of the "Jewish wickedness" there. He did, in fact, establish an Inquisition in Goa in 1560.<sup>31</sup> These actions by Albuquerque and Xavier caused the final immigration of the Jews to the Cochin area from Anjuvannam.

It was during this time that the Moors of Calicut fought the Hindu rulers of Cochin and other areas, and then there was fighting between the Hindus and the Portuguese.<sup>32</sup> Hence, when the Rajah granted the favors to the Jews it was "liberality" not only because of the monetary concessions that were entailed, but, also, because of the political ramifications and provided an added potential for even more fighting be-

in Jewish History," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, vol. xxx, 1962, p. 39. The other towns are Ernakulam, Mala, Parur, and Chennamangalam.

27. Koder, *History*, p. 7.

28. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 16.

29. Koder, *History*, pp. 4, 7; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 56; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 430, 439.

30. Koder, *History*, p. 7. Fischel, "Cochin in Jewish History," p. 37; Rabinowitz, *Mission*, p. 98.

31. Koder, *History*, p. 7.

32. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 13.

tween the Rajah and the Portuguese, because the Rajah had also promised to protect Jew Town. (In fact, the Portuguese did, at times, try to continue to harass the Jews once they were in Cochin, but they were, indeed, protected by the Rajah.)<sup>33</sup> The Rajah's magnanimous actions certainly could be interpreted as a strong rebuff to the Portuguese, implying "not only are we against you, but we will do all we can to undermine your activities." However, this should not be construed as negating the truly humane interests and the friendly manner of the Hindus. They did what few, if any, western people were willing to do—not only did they tolerate Jewish existence, they actively promoted its prosperity.

### *Social Stratification*

The advent of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula added another dimension to Jewish life in Cochin, and consequently, new problems. These Spanish and other foreign Jews became known as the "Paradesi," meaning foreign, or White Jews, while the native-born Jews were known as the Black Jews. The Whites considered the Blacks as not pure Jews and held their services in a separate synagogue in which the others were not permitted to pray. Intermarriage, interdining and virtually any other social intercourse between the two groups was prohibited until 1937 and even later. Intermarriage is still forbidden by the two groups and ritual observances continue to be conducted separately.<sup>34</sup>

The separation of the two groups was easily maintained because the White Jews' skin color ranged from white to light brown, whereas the Black Jews' skin color was dark brown like that of the native population.<sup>35</sup> It was probably because of this resemblance to the native population that the Black Jews were considered by the Spanish ones to be of impure blood. In some respects this separation resembled the caste system of India; however, occupation was not prescribed by "caste" as was the case with the Indians,<sup>36</sup> and separation was imposed by the foreigners,<sup>37</sup> those who had not lived with the Indians and their castes, rather than by the indigenous Jewish population who might have been influenced by the Indian castes and willing to create their own.

A third Jewish group involved in the Cochin area are the Brown Jews, also known as the Meshuḥrarim.<sup>38</sup> These are the descendants of emancipated slaves of Spanish, Dutch, and Arabian Jews, or, essentially,

33. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 430.

34. Kushner, *Immigrants*, pp. 13–14; Koder, *History*, pp. 9–10; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 431–434; Fischel, *Unknown Jews*, pp. 113–114.

35. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 424.

36. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 13.

37. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 431–432, 434; Koder, *History*, p. 10.

38. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 424, esp. 424n.

the White Jews.<sup>39</sup> In Jewish law, slaves of Jews during their time of servitude must observe some of the obligations of Jews, such as circumcision, the dietary laws and the Sabbath and Holidays. When they are freed, they may choose to become Jews or to revert to their previous religion, if they had one. All they need do is declare their intentions of becoming Jews and they are to be considered of full legal Jewish status.<sup>40</sup> For reasons unknown, however, these Brown Jews were refused full admittance into the Paradesi community and, thus, they remained a group unto themselves. They were allowed to pray in the synagogue of the White Jews but could not marry with them. They themselves prohibited marriage with the Black Jews.<sup>41</sup> Their skin color also is dark brown, like that of the Black Jews. Despite the fact that the majority of Jews in Cochin are Black and, thus, racially distinct from the small minority of White Jews, the way of life for all the Jews in Cochin is basically the same.<sup>42</sup>

In his book, *Immigrants From India in Israel*, Gilbert Kushner portrays their way of life as centered around their religious life, and as such, in the synagogue. Most of the Cochini men were small-time itinerant merchants, buying merchandise at one place and peddling it at a slightly higher price elsewhere. They would work for as long as it took them to sell their goods, since their goal was not to amass great fortunes but to earn enough for themselves and their families to live on. The men would then spend the rest of their day at the synagogue talking with the others there about religious matters, business or anything else.<sup>43</sup> All men

39. Alexander Marx, "Contribution à l'histoire des Juifs de Cochin," *Revue des Etudes Juives*, 89 (1930): 294-295; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 424, esp. 424n., p. 437.

40. Marx, "Contribution," pp. 297-304; Rabinowitz, *Far East Mission*, p. 111.

41. Koder, *History*, p. 10; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 424.

42. Kushner, *Immigrants*, pp. 14, 15; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 424. For Mandelbaum's estimation of how the "caste system" evolved within the Jewish community, see pp. 443-447 of his article.

43. Kushner, *Immigrants*, pp. 19-20. It should be noted that this is a description of the Cochini's lifestyle of the more modern period. However, it appears that from at least 1500 through the mid-19th century certainly some portion of the community was ambitious and prosperous. In Marx's article and the document therein, which deal with the period around 1520, we see that of 900 Jewish families in Cochin one hundred (the White Jews) were poor and the rest were rich. During the Dutch period (1663-1795) the Jews were very well off in general, and a number of them had high places in the Dutch East India Company. Koder (*History*, p. 8) wrote, "The entire trade was in the hands of the Jews . . ." (cf. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 433). Samuel (*Op. cit.*, p. 57) said that during the British period the Jews prospered, too. Rabbi David d'Beth Hillel (Fischel, *Unknown Jews*, pp. 113-114) said that the White Jews of Cochin, when he was there in 1828-29, were poor. He said they were "too proud to work" and lived by selling trinkets and furniture which they had purchased during the more prosperous Portuguese period. The Black Jews at the time worked generally in mechanical jobs and he said that there were almost no poor among them. However, it seems that the community began to deteriorate during the mid-19th century and has continued to do so since then. For the period commencing in the late 1800's, the description contained herein is accurate. (Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 442, 453, 460, 437, 448.)

of ritual maturity (thirteen years old or older) attended the synagogue in the morning, late afternoon and evening for the three traditional daily services of the Jews. Status for the males of the community was achieved by proficiency in prayer and knowledge of the ritual and religious texts. The possession of religious skill, rather than wealth, was the means for social mobility within the Jewish community.<sup>44</sup> Women, generally, attended the synagogue only on the Sabbath and Holidays. Most of their time was spent in the care of the household and children.

Most of the Cochini were personally poor, but the community as a whole was very rich. The synagogue and the land which they controlled accounted for some of the wealth, and the many decorations found in the synagogues added some, but these were not things that would be used by the community for expenses. The bulk of their wealth was in the form of much silver and gold that had been accumulated over the years by the community. This money was used to support the poor, to provide for the Hebrew education of the children and to celebrate the Festivals. Also, on two of the major holidays, the head of each household would receive a stipend from these funds. The synagogue, then, was not only a house of prayer, meeting, and study, but, also, a sort of "social security" that gave each member of the community the feeling of a share in the community. These feelings were very strong, indeed.<sup>45</sup>

The Cochini were able to maintain their religious observance of the traditional patterns in a number of ways. Apparently, when the community began, they had the traditional texts with them, a knowledge of the ritual, and individuals who could perform the various functions necessary for the community. Such persons might have included, for example, a scribe, a mohel, and a shohet. It seems that, from generation to generation, they also instructed others to take over these duties.<sup>46</sup> There must also have been some continued contact with Jewry in other parts of the world. Joseph Rabban, to whom the copper plates were presented, had himself come to Cranganore from Yemen, from a distinguished Jewish family there.<sup>47</sup> Abu'l Kasim Obaidallah ibn Khor-dadbeh, son of the Governor of Tabaristan, and other travellers of the ninth century mention a Jewish settlement in what is thought to have been Cranganore.<sup>48</sup> The famous Jewish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, records a visit to the Indian Jews in 1167, though most scholars

44. Kushner, *Immigrants*, pp. 21-22; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 442, 453-454.

45. Kushner, *Immigrants*, pp. 20-21; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 448.

46. Mandelbaum, on p. 449, wrote, "This is the regular procedure in Cochin, one *shoheit* [ritual slaughterer] thus ordains another." Although he was speaking of a more modern period, it is not hard to believe that the skills were handed down in this manner since the community's beginning.

47. Koder, *History*, p. 5; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 54.

48. Koder, "Kerala," p. 4; Elkan Nathan Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, (New York: Hermon Press, 1966), p. 2.

agree that he himself did not go to India.<sup>49</sup> During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Cochini wrote a number of letters to prominent Egyptian rabbis regarding questions of intermarriage between the Jewish "castes."<sup>50</sup>

### *The Dutch Period and its Prosperity*

Perhaps the most significant contact came in 1686 when a group of Dutch Jewish merchants spent five days in Cochin. At that time, the Cochini arranged for the visitors to send prayer books and other ritual items to them from Holland, which had been in control of the Cochin area since 1663. Quite probably this was the delegation sent by the Amsterdam Jewish congregation and headed by Moses Pereira de Paiva. According to de Paiva's account of the trip, *Notisias dos Judeos de Cochin*, published in 1687, the Jews there practiced their religion in essentially the same manner as did the Jews in Amsterdam at the time, and the observances of the Black and White Jews were exactly the same. He also makes note of the fact that the community was visited regularly by Talmudic scholars who kept the community's ritual practices aligned with those of Europe.<sup>51</sup>

With this reference to the Dutch it is perhaps wise to backtrack and consider the period of their control in Cochin in slightly more detail. Unlike the Portuguese, who were interested in dominating their area in India, culturally as well as monetarily, the Dutch were primarily interested in trade. The Jews, because of their familiarity with local trade practices and the high esteem in which the local Rajah placed them, were a natural choice as intermediaries for the Dutch. There was also another reason for the Dutch cooperation with the Jews: gratitude. The Dutch had first tried, unsuccessfully, to rout the Portuguese in 1662, but they managed to escape with little damage because the Jews had helped them. For this aid to the Dutch the Portuguese extracted a high price from the Jews, who had paid in great losses of both blood and property. However, the Dutch attacked again in 1663 and were victorious. As Mandelbaum says, "Just as the Portuguese had carried with them to India their national traits of intolerance and persecution, so did the Dutch bring with them their pattern of religious freedom and civil tolerance."<sup>52</sup>

Not only the Jews benefited from the Dutch "tolerance." The Dutch were satisfied to take only a small tract of land at the Cochin

49. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 14; Walter J. Fischel, *Ha-yehudim b'Hodu* (Makhon ben Zevi, The Hebrew University: Jerusalem, 1960), p. 15; Adler, *Jewish Travellers*, p. xv.  
50. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 14; Marx, "Contribution," pp. 293-304; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 431-432.

51. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 14; Koder, *History*, p. 8; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 433-434; Samuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 57.

52. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 433.



harbor entrance and left the internal administration of the state with the Rajah of Cochin. The close cooperation that the Jews had with the Dutch merchants and government officers served to enhance the high regard in which the Cochin Rajahs had always placed them, and in 1688 the White Jews were granted a charter which established the hereditary position of *mudeliar*. Essentially, this charter put the government of their community into their own hands. "The *mudeliar* exercised criminal and civil jurisdiction over the white Jews and sat in judgment in the synagogue. Only in great and capital causes could the Rajah interfere."<sup>53</sup> Shemtob Castilien was the first *mudeliar*.

During the Dutch period some Jews rose to great power and prominence. Serving the Dutch East India Company (D.E.I.C.) and the ruler of Cochin, they played an important role in the economic development of the country. Much of the trade was in their hands. Jewish merchants consigned their cargo to Cochin Jewish ships or to ships with Semitic names, such as the "Maid of Judah" or the "Ascalon."<sup>54</sup> The Jews flourished in other pursuits in this period, too. Scribes produced beautiful graphics and "the liturgy was enriched . . . by native authors," Black and White.<sup>55</sup> In 1757, in Amsterdam, a collection of the Cochini's hymns was published for the White Jews. The man responsible for the publication was Ezekiel Rahabi (1694-1771), the most prominent Jewish merchant of the D.E.I.C. and, at times, a diplomat for them. He supported science as well as Jewish pursuits. His efforts made it possible to replace the holy and other books that had been destroyed by the Portuguese. In 1769, the hymn book was republished for the Black Jews, omitting the ceremony for converting non-Jews.<sup>56</sup>

It should be noted that the great prosperity of this Dutch period was enjoyed primarily by the White Jews. This does not mean that the Blacks were living in poverty, but it seems that the Whites were the only ones who carried on trade with the D.E.I.C. Jacob Canter Visscher, a Protestant chaplain in Cochin, wrote in a letter of 1723 that the White Jews were much richer and more powerful than the Black ones. He said that the Whites tried to prevent marriages with the Blacks but that they sometimes occurred anyway, which is an interesting fact, indeed. The Black Jews, he wrote, were traders in poultry, eggs, and butter, whereas the White Jews traded with the D.E.I.C. and sold more valuable merchandise. This report was confirmed sixty years later in the *Memoirandum* of Adriaan Moens, written in 1781 to instruct his successor as governor. He wrote that the Black Jews were involved with agriculture, cattle raising, and food trade, especially butter and poultry. The White

53. Ibid.

54. Koder, *History*, p. 8.

55. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 436.

56. Koder, *History*, p. 8; Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," p. 436.

Jews, he said, had very close connections with the D.E.I.C.<sup>57</sup> One of my Cochini informants has suggested that the White Jews took the name "Paradesi" (foreign) for themselves in order to gain the higher status associated with foreigners. It would seem that, during the Portuguese period, to be associated with the foreigners was of dubious value. (Remember that the Paradesi Synagogue was completed in 1568, the middle of the Portuguese rule). However, during the Dutch period, the Paradesi status may, indeed, have helped those Jews, since the Dutch may have preferred to trade with "foreigners" like themselves, rather than with the local population. It may also simply have been that the White Jews were more adept than the Black ones in such trade. In any case, it is clear from these first-hand accounts that the White Jews were involved in the lucrative Dutch East India Company trade and the Black Jews were more simple, less rich, local traders.<sup>58</sup>

### *Aliyah and the Situation Today*

It can also be seen that, although geographically far from any other Jewish community, the Jews of Cochin maintained their religious affiliation and observance comparably to other, perhaps better situated, Jewish communities. As religious Jews, they prayed three times a day for the return of the Jewish people to the land of their forefathers. And so, in 1948, with the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, one can imagine their great joy! Many of them decided immediately to emigrate to Israel; others soon reached that decision. In 1952, the Jewish Agency started to bring the Jews of India to Israel and during the next few years many left. In 1954, the entire Jewish community of Mala went to Israel, and today almost none of the Jews of Cochin remain in India.<sup>59</sup>

In Israel, the styles, customs, and traditions of the Cochini have already begun to change.<sup>60</sup> One of my Cochini informants, a young, successful nurse, said she thought that the Cochini should put aside their customs in favor of Israeli ones, if the Israeli ones are better. One such Cochini custom is to have a large feast for the relatives of a person thirty days after the person's burial. She said that the family of a cousin of hers had decided not to have such a feast and many of the older relatives were both surprised and upset. Apparently this custom is losing adherents. Another custom not frequently observed is that of lengthy, elaborate wedding festivals, which, in the past, lasted for two weeks and even more. The practice of holding marriages on only Tuesdays also seems to be more and more ignored. The elaborate copper plate practices mentioned earlier are also difficult to see in Israel. On the Sabbath, Cochini men

57. Mandelbaum, "Way of Life," pp. 434-435.

58. See note 43 above.

59. Kushner, *Immigrants*, p. 23; Koder, *History*, p. 9.

60. Kushner, *Immigrants*, pp. 66-87.

traditionally wore a smock-like white shirt, which reached mid-thigh, with *zizit* over the shirt, and long, white, baggy pants (Indian pajamas). On the *moshavim* that I visited, some of the older Cochini men continued to carry out this custom, but none of the younger men do.

It has been said that Jews need to face outside danger or persecution in order for them to maintain Jewish life. Some believe that this was the secret of success for the great Jewish communities and the unsurpassed Jewish scholarship in Europe. The Cochini Jews, and Indian Jewry in general, prove the inherent viability of Judaism and Jewish life, and that Jews need not be persecuted in order to remain Jews. One hopes that the Cochini will not totally assimilate into the Israeli setting and that some part of this truly amazing community will remain as a reminder of their strange, beautiful, and unique past.

### An Impressive Effort

*A History of Judaism: Vol. I, From Abraham to Maimonides.* By DANIEL JEREMY SILVER. Vol. II, *Europe and the New World.* By BERNARD MARTIN. Basic Books, Inc. New York. 1974. 476 pp. + xvi and 527 pp. + xv.

*Reviewed by* JOSEPH L. BLAU

THE ATTEMPT to write a historical account of the development of Judaism demands superlative courage as the initial qualification of the author or authors. Wherever one's scholarly or religious beliefs may lead him to start the story, it is a long and complicated one, and it involves the emotional life and personal faith of the writer as well as his intellectual convictions. In addition, for much of the Biblical period, there is a virtual absence of hard data for history though there are plenty of reports for faith. For the later periods the key problem may be that Judaism has existed wherever Jews have lived, and has taken forms and borrowed concepts from each of the environing host cultures. Merely to know enough about these hosts to be able to recognize their traces in Judaism is the occupation of one or more lifetimes.

Underlying these, and other such special problems of the history of Judaism, there are general problems that affect all historians of religion. Every religion can be viewed from the outside and from the inside, and the two perspectives rarely agree. From the inside, we have what the German scholars call a "salvation-history" (*Heilsgeschichte*), that is, an account of what adherents believe to be the true narrative of the revelation of the spiritual realities of their faith; from the outside we need the kind

of "hard" evidence that a general historian would demand as the justification for a reconstruction of the past.

Salvation-history is what the insider must believe in order to be redeemed; history is the scholarly attempt to reconstruct as much of what actually happened as can be discovered. Salvation-histories are part of the data of history; but they are data for the history of the time of their composition more than for the time which they presumably record. The Gospel according to Mark tells little or nothing reliable about Jesus or Palestine in the time of Jesus, but it is a valuable source from which to learn the problems and preoccupations of the Christians in Rome at the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.

To make this statement about the Gospel of Mark may require little soul-searching for a Jewish writer; to say something similar about the story of Abraham or that of Moses may well be heart-rending. All of us face with indifference the denigration of the *sancta* of others, but resent the slightest breath of doubt cast upon our own. Meanwhile, Christian students have little emotional resistance to overcome in approaching parts of our Bible with the methods of critical scholarship and can face the dismissal of the historicity of the stories of Joseph with as little concern as the Jewish student feels in reading that none of the supposed details of the life of Jesus commands any extra-scriptural evidence.

## II

The problems suggested briefly above are, of course, more intense the nearer the student gets to the remote sources of his faith. One

cannot write about the history of Judaism without confronting an ultimate problem of decision: When does the history of Judaism begin? With Abraham? With Moses? With the prophets of righteousness of the eighth pre-Christian century? With the return from the Babylonian Exile? With the final destruction of the Temple and its sacrificial cult? The volumes in hand take a generously traditional view. Dr. Silver and Dr. Martin are "products of the Western intellectual tradition," they tell us, "liberal and critical in their orientation toward the Jewish tradition, but nonetheless committed Jews" (I, xi). From this perspective they "have refused to restrict our understanding of Judaism to a creed, code of conduct, or cultic system" (I, x). The history of Judaism is part of the history of the Jews and "includes the entire intellectual culture of the Jewish people and the phenomena that have significantly molded its inner life" (*Ibid.*). In spite of these declarations, noble as well as courageous, the first volume is sub-titled "From Abraham to Maimonides." This time-span is surely more the product of commitment than of a critical orientation.

The problem of conflict between the faith-story and the critical story is most acute in the early history as given in the Biblical books. Rabbi Silver is aware of the dimensions of the problem and tries to balance the two approaches in his own narrative. Thus, for example, in talking of the myths of Genesis, he gives the *coup de grace* to the theory, so dear to the hearts of such learned and pious moderns as the late Professor William F. Albright, that the correctness of geographical and topographical indications in the stories supports the truth of the accounts of the patriarchs. Silver's

sentence is a classic that deserves to be given careful attention: "Authenticity of detail does not prove the historicity of an entire episode, or even the existence of the named protagonists" (I, 5). Yet this is followed, two sentences later, with an over-enthusiastic continuation: "But the wealth of culturally and chronologically appropriate detail suggests that the sagas were formed in the period which they describe, and reliably transmitted over many generations. The events so described can no longer be summarily dismissed as fanciful inventions." This is fence-sitting with a vengeance. The argument from accuracy of detail, the authority of which is denied in the first sentence, is reasserted in the second.

More usually, the contrast is not so clearly demonstrated. Silver often reports the Biblical story from the standpoint of faith, even to the point of introducing a homiletical note, reading later attitudes back into early situations. Even while he notes with the eye of the scholar that the early semi-nomadic Hebrews "looked toward the land with the land hunger of pioneers, not the spiritual thirst of pilgrims" he reports also that "Why God chose this particular land is never explained" (I, 8). In other respects, too, his theology intrudes into his scholarship: "The Bible alone of the literatures of antiquity is almost devoid of myth" (I, 16). The later monotheism of the time of the composition of the Biblical text is assumed for the presumptive period of the narrative. "God was not associated with any single place, but made Himself manifest in various places" (*Ibid.*), when what is critically needed is some statement on the order of:

The number of theophanies in a variety of places suggests an originally polytheistic belief that was

later editorialized into the concept of one universal God.

Occasionally the intrusion of the pulpit into the study is less a matter of *Heilsgeschichte* impinging upon *Geschichte* than of the sense of omniscience that so many speakers affect:

Moved by an unconscious wisdom, the nation began setting things down, first Deuteronomy, now Jeremiah, moving from the memorized to the written word. They would need their books when the pain of exile dulled their mind (I, 138).

In oral discourse the hearer might overlook statements of this sort; they are hard to forgive when presented as historical scholarship.

In the post-Biblical materials treated in the first volume Silver's genuine capacities as a scholar begin to outweigh his genuine capacities as a preacher. The instances of homiletic exposition are rarer. He presents more sober analyses of the later literature, except for the apocalyptic materials of both the canonic scripture and the pseudepigrapha. There is room for difference of opinion in his judgment of the reaction against "Hellenism" in what he calls "the age of variety." Surely Elias Bickerman's view (in the essays that make up his brilliant book, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*), that the Hasmonians were not so much anti-Hellenizers as moderate Hellenizers, deserves to be taken into consideration. Morton Smith, too, would disagree with the notion that, in the second century B.C.E., it was "the popular assumption that Torah was an all-embracing way of life" (I, 182). The fault here is once more the transfer of the ideas of a later time into the age before the Temple and its cult were destroyed by the might of Rome. From 175 B.C.E., the date of Jason's elevation to the high-

priestly office, to the elimination of the Temple cult of sacrifice in 70 C.E. is a period of more than two hundred years, longer than the national existence of the United States. The popular status of the Torah can no more be derived from the later period and applied to the earlier one than can today's Supreme Court constructions of the Constitution be used to define what was in the mind of those who wrote the Constitution.

In spite of this critical note, Silver's discussions of the post-Biblical and rabbinic periods are more soberly historical than homiletical. He gently reproves the (unnamed) historians who try "to paint the Pharisees and/or *Perushim* as the first complete religious democrats" (I, 231), a much needed corrective to the overvigorous efforts of many American rabbis to identify Pharisaic Judaism as the root and source of American democracy. He actually goes so far as to recognize the casuistic element in the rabbinical struggle to use a sacralized Torah as the basis for day-to-day living and for making a living in a non-sacral world.

Every line in the literature of rabbinic jurisprudence testifies to the inevitable tension between the changing needs of the time and the unchangeable text of revelation (I, 266).

There is no pussyfooting here, no pious nonsense about the rabbis merely explicating the divine law. The rabbinical contribution is clearly defined as "adjustment of the law to life" (I, 267).

The third major segment of Silver's volume concerns the reshaping and defense of Judaism in the period of Muslim domination, from the seventh century C.E. This is the period of his own doctoral studies and, in general, Silver moves here with an assurance and

scholarly competence that is refreshing. Indeed, his twentieth chapter, entitled "The Other Moses," dealing with Maimonides, is as good a brief statement as I can recall reading. He has moved far enough from the original roots of the tradition and from the emotionally significant *Heilsgeschichte* to be able to write history.

### III

The second volume of this *History of Judaism* carries as its subtitle "Europe and the New World." Bernard Martin, its author, although he has rabbinical training, has made his primary career as a scholar and teacher in the academic study of religion. The absence of a confusion of roles in this part of the double work (scarcely a collaboration) leads to a much more consistent level of treatment of the material from the reawakening of European Jewish life in the tenth century C.E. to the present. It is, perhaps, inevitable that this makes for a less exciting "read" than Silver's less accurate and less consistent volume.

In several respects Martin's work is deserving of high praise and wide readership. To one reader, the most significant features are these. First, Martin sees and discusses the discontinuity between Judaism in the Islamic Middle East and Judaism in the Christian West. Traditional treatments of Jewish history and the history of Judaism stress the continuities, trying to make the historical development the product exclusively of an internal dialogue, a dialogue carried on entirely within the Jewish group. Martin recognizes both the continuities and the discontinuities as the product of the dialogue of Judaism with its various host-environments.

Second, the author has not been taken in by the sentimental representation of Jewish life in Eastern

Europe (as, for example, in A. J. Heschel). This view, too, is related to his appreciation of the importance of cultural interchange between Judaism and its hosts—always an interchange affecting both parties, never a one-way street. Judaism, he says,

probably became more stagnant and uncreative in the period of ghettoization than in almost any previous era of its long history. By and large, the Jewish religious leaders and thinkers who lived in the age and milieu of compulsory segregation from the larger world were inferior in intellectual power, poorer in imagination, narrower in sympathy, and less innovative in response to emergent conditions than those who came before and after them (II, 153).

These words constitute a lesson from history that should be pondered by all who would try to turn back the clock by a voluntary segregation.

In the third place, once more a related idea: Martin finds the

acceptance of the *Shulhan Aruch* as the final halachic authority . . . , in many respects, regrettable. It meant that the *halachah*, which had already lost much of its original plasticity, now became quite congealed. . . . Only one stereotyped pattern of Jewish religious life came to be regarded as legitimate (II, 148).

Again we see in Martin's view, though hedged by "in many respects," his refusal to accept the stock view of the apologists masquerading as historians to argue the beauty of monolithic Eastern European orthodoxy.

Beyond these points, Martin has made an excellent beginning of a positive statement of the virtues of American Jewish life in the twentieth century. In this discussion, too, he looks at American Judaism with his own eyes, with love and respect



for its diversity and pluralism. He is not blind to the faults of twentieth-century American Judaism, but he also sees its fumbblings toward new and contemporary interpretations of spirituality. Similarly, his view of the State of Israel and its potential significance for a "great revival of Judaism" (II, 460) is that of a sober admirer rather than of a wildly romantic lover.

We must accept the weakness of the academic study of religion as well as its many virtues. To the "true believer," whether in a religious or an irreligious cause, academic writing will always seem tepid. Partisanship is uncomfortable with impartiality. Dr. Martin is never completely impartial (who of us can be?), but his partisanship is guarded and hedged by cautious expression.

More serious, however, is the tendency of the academic student of religion to overemphasize what, to him, is most important, the intellectual and cerebral aspects of religious life. Far too much of this book is given over to the discussion of religious thinkers—philosophers, theologians, theorists of law and of cosmology. If to the distinction (borrowed by Bahya ibn Pakuda from the Muslim philosophers) between the "duties of the limbs" and the "duties of the heart" we were to add yet a third, the "duties of the head," I should say all three must be represented in a just account of any religion. Of the three, however, each satisfies the religious yearnings of a different part of the population. For the "man in the street," it is probably most important that he should *feel* a sense of solidarity with his fellows and an at-homeness in the universe; his is the religion of the heart, best represented in modern Judaism by Hasidism. The institutional religionist needs to know what to *do*;

for him the "duties of the limbs" are salvific and satisfying. There is only a minority of those who are religiously satisfied by the *amor intellectualis dei* of Spinoza, devotees of the religion of the head.

#### IV

These are worthy volumes and their authors deserve our gratitude for the long and arduous task they have endured for our sake and *le-shem shamayim*—for the sake of heaven. Rabbi Silver and Professor Martin have made a splendid start toward a goal that will never be reached, a history of Judaism that will be acceptable both as external narrative and as the "inside story." Their books deserve to be read and absorbed by everyone in the Jewish community who seeks an understanding of his own being.

JOSEPH L. BLAU is professor of religion at Columbia University, vice-president of the Conference on Jewish Social Studies and chairman of the committee on the history of religion of the American Council of Learned Societies.



#### Truth Is Everywhere

*A Passion For Truth.* By ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. New York. 1973. 336 pp. \$8.95.

*Reviewed by* ALAN L. BERGER

*A Passion For Truth*, Professor Heschel's last book, is a study in "depth theology" (p. 86). It is an analysis of Reb Mendl of Kotzk and Søren Kierkegaard, two representatives of experiential religiosity. Prudently, Heschel de-emphasizes doctrinal matters in favor of what he always considered quintessential in religion: *existential* commitment. The Kotzker and Kierkegaard rendered vital service

to their respective traditions in warning against formalism. "As gadflies," writes Heschel, "not as models for imitation, they deprive us of contentment and peace of mind" (p. 88). The religious life cannot be merely studied; to be effective it must be lived. It was no accident that Heschel himself served as Professor of both mysticism and ethics. He was a descendent, on both sides, of a long line of Hasidic thinkers.

The decisive battle waged by historical religion is for survival. In the process, spiritual vitality must be maintained. *A Passion For Truth*, like all of the Heschel oeuvre, contains a message for modernity; it is not simply a recapitulation of history or of philosophico-religious tenets. The past is useful only as a goad to the present. Reb Mendl, the zaddik, and Kierkegaard, the Danish theologian, both witnessed a truth which, according to Heschel, has been lost sight of owing to the hubris of contemporary man.

It is ironic that the natural sciences have long since abandoned the assumption that man is the center of nature and ultimate end of the evolutionary process, but that we still regard it as unnatural, even inconceivable, for man not to act primarily in his own interests in human relations. Having left scientific anthropocentricity behind, we cling to egocentricity in religion and morality. (p. 316).

Heschel interprets the Kotzker as positing two categories in basic opposition, *faith* and *egocentricity*. Kierkegaard, for his part, viewed the choice in terms of either/or. One may choose the "aesthetic" life, or the "ethical" existence. The former is concerned with mere satisfaction, while the ethical demands rigorous ethico-religious adherence. Both men deride the value of words alone in the pursuit of a re-

ligious existence. Commitment, or deeds, supersede theologizing. For Heschel, the Kotzker and Kierkegaard may be viewed, then, in the light of *Avot*, "Everyone whose deeds are more than his wisdom, his wisdom endures. And everyone whose wisdom is more than his deeds, his wisdom does not endure" (III.12).

Heschel notes the obvious socio-religious differences between the Kotzker and Kierkegaard, i.e., monotheism as opposed to christocentrism, God in need of man versus God's absolute self-reliance, and affirmation of life "in the world" as compared to the Kierkegaardian call for melancholy and suffering. Nevertheless, the book focuses upon the remarkable degree of congeniality between the two virtuosi.

Neither Kierkegaard nor the Kotzker was a reformer in the sense that he criticized the doctrines of his traditions or introduced new tenets. Each drew attention to a new perspective and saw his role as corrective only (p. 310).

I have no basic disagreement with this point. There is only a matter of emphasis. The Kotzker and Kierkegaard both represent a "revolution by tradition." They were revolutionaries in the sense of recalling what they perceived as the basic standards of their tradition, and evaluating contemporary religious behavior accordingly. Heschel notes of the Kotzker that he "only stretched to extremes what his predecessors had carried halfway" (p. 311). Hasidism had become endangered, asserted Reb Mendl, because of its mass appeal, which led to the danger of "spiritual enfeeblement" (p. 143). Renewal could occur only by re-emphasis upon the role of the individual. Not, as Heschel rightly observes, a "secular individualism," but "an individual's personal, in-

timate, and vivid relationship to God" (p. 145). Similarly, Kierkegaard contrasted the "official worship of God" with New Testament standards of Christianity. "Pastors," he observed, "are royal officials; royal officials have nothing to do with Christianity" (p. 151). The issue for both men is how to effect authentic religiosity in spite of the threat posed by hierarchy and professionalism, which had steadily crept into and, to a large extent, replaced personal commitment.

The first chapter presents a succinct yet lucid history of Hasidic mystical religiosity, set against its kabbalistic antecedents. Heschel creatively describes the differences between the Baal Shem Tov and the Kotzker, and between the latter and the Gaon of Vilna. The remainder of the book, excepting chapter nine, "The Kotzker and Job," constitutes a study of Kotzker Hasidism and Kierkegaardian Christianity. Heschel isolates the anomic quality inherent in both thinkers. He writes,

They were high-strung, hyper-conscious, living strenuously. There was nothing light or playful about them, and they used language as if it were a sledgehammer (p. 202).

It is no wonder, then, that the Kotzker and Kierkegaard stressed the individual as opposed to the communal in religion. The "world," i.e., ceremonialism, is the enemy of true religiosity. "Conformity was deformity," writes Heschel, "in the eyes of the Kotzker" (p. 167). Reb Mendl and Kierkegaard are militant warriors in the continuous battle against complacency or routinization, as Weber called it, in religious observance.

*A Passion For Truth* highlights a shift, in both Western Christianity and Judaism, from objectivity

to subjectivity. The Kotzker, for example, emphasized not mere action, but, rather, "the person who performs the action and is involved in study" (p. 107). Kierkegaard initiated a similar Copernican revolution, "from the objective world of ideas to the person who has those ideas" (p. 106). Faith, for both men, "constituted a demand rather than a consolation or comfort" (p. 124).

Heschel's suggestive study is an important contribution to those interested in the Hasidic ambience. He demonstrates his arguments with an impressive array of scholarship, citing rabbinical literature and the Talmud, as well as Hasidic texts. He accurately notes the changes undergone by Hasidism. For example, Reb Mendl's discourse "was influenced by neither the *Zohar* nor the so-called writings of Rabbi Yitzhak Luria" (p. 78). Bound to the Baal Shem Tov, as the movement's founder, Mendl nevertheless significantly altered the *praxis* of the master, e.g. "nothing is as obnoxious as demonstrative piety" (p. 49). Moreover, the distinction between classical, i.e., Beshtian Hasidism and its nineteenth-century *dissident* expression in Przysucha and Kotzk, is manifested by a concern only for the elite, "to prevent the dissipation of the spiritual gifts of the rebbe on the paltry concerns of the people" (p. 231). Reb Mendl and Kierkegaard both "assigned a second-class religiosity to the many" (p. 140).

*A Passion For Truth* is an informative, if uneven, work. Although claiming to be a comparative analysis, the main focus is on Reb Mendl, or, better, on Heschel's interpretation of Kotzker Hasidism. Many of Mendl's assertions had in fact been long associated with traditional Jewish *praxis*. For example, the Kotzker

is portrayed as claiming that "a virtuous act performed routinely, without the participation of heart and mind, did not pay homage to God" (pp. 42-43). Yet as early as Judah the Hasid, pious Jews asserted that "a prayer without *kavanah* is like a body without a soul" (*tefilah be-lo kavanah, ke-guf bli neshamah*). There is, in addition, a problem with Heschel's contention that Reb Mendl's "incisive insights should open our eyes to inauthenticity in the sphere of religion, to the outright deceptions in politics and social relations and in institutional operations" (p. 133). This possibility seems more hopeful than feasible. Religious figures who demand *truth* (Kotzker) or melancholy (Kierkegaard) can have no real hope of influencing the community at large, at least over a long span of time. Heschel relates an anecdote illustrative of Mendl's revulsion at mendacity, a concern that manifested itself early in the Kotzker's life.

He once saw a woman selling apples in the marketplace. Delicious-looking, ripe apples were displayed on the top of the basket, while rotten ones filled the rest. The nine-year-old boy turned the basket over, ruined her business, and brought anger and censure upon himself (p. 158).

It is not surprising that the "school" of Kotzker lost its vitality soon after the master's voluntary withdrawal from the world, and disappeared completely after Reb Mendl's death (1859). Itzhak Meir, the Gerer rebbe, a disciple of the Kotzker, succeeded his master, and advocated a more communal type of piety.

Heschel has convincingly demonstrated that one can speak, comparatively, on the level of spiritual experience, no matter how difficult and disputatious the discourse on

matters of theological orientation becomes. Aside from stressing important scholarly concerns, and the continuity-change phenomenon in Hasidism, Heschel has drawn attention to the irreducible role of commitment in the religious life. Religious behavior can be expressed through various modes. No matter what one thinks of his almost exclusive concern with experience as opposed to doctrine, Heschel's work underscores the danger, inherent in any long-continuing tradition, of stagnation, and the need for constant renewal. *A Passion For Truth* can be expected to exercise a profound impact upon a contemporary society which once again finds itself overburdened with form, at the expense of substance.

ALAN L. BERGER teaches Judaica in the religion department of Syracuse University.



## Two Reactions to One Book

*Jewish Reflections on Death*. Edited by JACK RIEMER, with a foreword by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross. Schocken Books. New York, 1975. 192 pp. \$7.95.

*Reviewed by* DAVID NOVAK

BOOKS ABOUT DEATH fall into two categories: either they are addressed to persons who have *just* experienced the death of someone near them, or they are addressed to a wider circle of persons who *inevitably* will have this experience. Books of the former type are numerous because the bereaved seek comfort and solace of an inspirational nature. However, books of the latter type, which are addressed to all the rest of us who are not so recently bereaved, although we are the obvious majority, are quite sparse. Why is this the case?—Be-

cause, I believe, the desire to be soothed after an individual loss is more conscious than the desire to know what it is that we all really lose. The expression of the first desire is encouraged, whereas the expression of this other desire is often repressed.

It is a sign of the growing maturity of American life that books, by serious authors, which speak to our need to know death's meaning, are beginning to appear and to be accepted as important contributions to a heretofore neglected field. Thanatology, the study of death, has been considerably advanced by the contributions of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross who has written a short, but moving foreword to Jack Riemer's anthology, *Jewish Reflections on Death*.

The Riemer anthology is, I believe, as important a contribution to contemporary Jewish thought as Kubler-Ross' work is to contemporary psychotherapeutic thought. In an admirable job of editing, Rabbi Riemer has collected a number of deeply significant analyses of the meaning of death to Jews and Judaism, many of which are new even to students of Jewish thought. Furthermore, he has not only arranged these selections thematically but, even more importantly, he has juxtaposed opposing views on the same topic. His brief introductions to each section bring out these differences. Thus, in the first part he points out (p. 33) the contrast between the positions of Hans J. Morgenthau ("Death in the Nuclear Age") and of A. J. Heschel ("Death as Homecoming"). In the second part he sets (p. 75) the views of J. B. Soloveitchik ("The Halakhah of the First Day") and Emanuel Feldman ("Death as Estrangement") against the view of Audrey Gordon ("The Psychological Wisdom of the Law"). And in the third section he points up

(p. 105) the opposition between the view of Hayim Greenberg ("The Right to Kill?") and that of Daniel Jeremy Silver ("The Right to Die?"). These three antitheses and the essays I have just cited are the most interesting parts of the book for the theologian and the philosopher.

In his essay, "Death in the Nuclear Age," the political scientist, Hans J. Morgenthau argues that

It is a distinctive characteristic of our secular age that it has replaced the belief in the immortality of the human person with the attempt to assure the immortality of the world he leaves behind (p. 41).

(However,) . . .

nuclear destruction . . . destroys the meaning of immortality by making both society and history impossible (p. 44).

For Morgenthau, the possibility of nuclear holocaust makes the hope for human transcendence of death absurd and "a secular age . . . is left without a remedy" (p. 45). In his view, man creates his own meaning and, by implication, his own meaninglessness. The conditions for meaning (belief in immortality) have been destroyed by the conditions for meaninglessness (the threat of nuclear destruction). The first has already been lost; the second is irrevocable.

Whether the late theologian, Abraham J. Heschel was specifically reacting to Morgenthau's essay or not, he was certainly reacting to the type of thinking which it represents. One could react in one of two ways: either challenge the conclusion or challenge the premise. An internationalist (if there are any left) might argue against the conclusion by saying that a united world community could banish the threat of nuclear destruction. However, is not such a

united world community an example of the type of collective transcendence that the nuclear threat has *already* destroyed? Heschel ("Death as Homecoming"), on the other hand, challenges the premise, namely, is it man alone who confers meaning on human life? "Man is man not because of what he has in common with the earth but *because of what he has in common with God*" (p. 62). To seek one's own transcendence in personal or collective immortality is for Heschel simply another act of "being-in-the-world" (p. 66). Therefore, the only real transcendence is that of God, to whom "we hope" (*ibid.*) we are included in His thoughts. The world, and we as part of it, receive meaning only when the image of God seeks its Subject beyond. (Rabbi Riemer and I, at different times, learned this lesson personally from our late, lamented teacher.) This is the Jewish response to the threat of annihilation, which for us began long before the nuclear age. We have always lived with the threat. The rest of the world, as usual, is late in catching up.

The renowned Boston halakhist-theologian, J. B. Soloveitchik, and the Atlanta rabbi, Emanuel Feldman, discuss Jewish mourning law as it expresses Jewish theological ideas. Feldman, especially, is impatient with attempts simply to show how Jewish mourning law is "congruent with current intellectual vogues" (p. 85), that is, with attempts at "psychologizing" it (p. 92, n. 2). Now "psychologizing" can mean either an attempt to *reduce* all of Jewish mourning law to psychological explanations, that is, a reduction to the person's relationship with him or herself; or it can simply see the dynamics of the law in psychological terms without denying deeper grounds. I think that Feldman confuses the latter

with the former and, thus both he and Soloveitchik miss an important psychological factor in one crucial aspect of Jewish mourning law.

Feldman writes,

"the surviving, living mourner . . . now knows what it is to experience the end of life and the termination of a meaningful relationship with God . . . the law asks the mourner to behave as if he himself were dead" (pp. 87-88).

I assume that he is most specifically referring to the fact that the *onen*, the mourner before the burial, is excused from observing positive commandments, as are the dead (see *Shabbat* 151b). Referring to *Tosafot* (*Berakhot* 17b, s.v. "*patur*") which quotes the Palestinian Talmud (*Berakhot* 3.1 interpreting Deut. 16:3) as to why an *onen* is exempt from the positive *mizvot*, Soloveitchik writes, "The commitment accepted in Egypt is applicable to man who is preoccupied with life and not to one who has encountered death" (p. 77). He continues, "How can man pray and address himself to God if he doubts his very humanity. . . ?" (p. 78). This is a very ingenious interpretation of an important source of Jewish mourning law, and it is a theological interpretation. For death is, as Feldman states in this same spirit, "the powerful nonlife, nondivine force" (p. 85). Thus, immediate involvement with death precludes involvement with God.

However, I believe that this interpretation misses the whole point of the text which essentially expresses a psychological insight, albeit a theologically grounded one. The text is *not* saying that there is an exemption for one who has "encountered death." How does one encounter death, anyhow? If one survives a probably fatal experience he is responsible for the



mizvot. If, conversely, he succumbs to a fatal experience he is *forever* dispensed from the mizvot. Clearly, then, the *onen*, who is only *temporarily* dispensed, is in neither category. He has not "encountered death," he has encountered *someone who has just died* (*osek b'metim*), that is, his relative is "lying before him" (*mutal lifanau*). Therefore, when others more closely related are able to attend to the needs of the dead, it is questionable whether the dispensation is to be followed (see *Tosafot, Berakhhot* 18 a, s.v. "*v'e-no*", end). Now what R. Bun is saying is that God Himself takes a "back seat," as it were, and requires the survivor to *concentrate all his attention* on the dead person until he is properly buried. In other words, God is more concerned with human dignity (see *Berakhhot* 19b-20a) than with even His own. In this case, human dignity (*kavod ha'beriyot*) is the "dignity of the deceased" (*k'vodo shel met*, *P. Berakhhot* 3.1). The Yiddish proverb, *Vos is tzu Gott tzu Gott, tzu leit tzu leit*, is not a Jewish version of "Render unto Caesar, etc.," but is, rather, an expression of an internal Jewish recognition of a specifically and exclusively human sphere of operation (cf. *Beizah* 15b). Surely this is not "psychologizing" in the reductive sense. Rather, it is phenomenology which is a non-reductive description of the essential structures of an experience.<sup>1</sup>

How ironic it is that Audrey Gordon, a layperson using a second-day source, expresses the meaning of this whole passage so accurately.

It even releases the *onen* from the obligation to perform any positive

commandments . . . so that he may devote himself instead to these burial preparations and arrangements (p. 97).

In all fairness, however, I am sure that Rabbis Soloveitchik and Feldman well understand the meaning of this passage. It is just that their existentialist philosophical standpoint causes them overly to avoid direct psychological explanations.

In part three, "Some Ultimate Questions," the first two essays deal with euthanasia. Daniel Jeremy Silver seems to argue in favor of it in just above every instance. Realizing that one's judgment about euthanasia is largely contingent on his definition of death, Silver writes,

the word *death* has no specific definition. What we mean by death is what the consensus of a society, or the law of that society, describes death to be (p. 119).

Although he recognizes the possible misuses of euthanasia (for example, black heart donors for white survivors, pp. 120-121), he proposes that the solution "is to accept the new definition of death by brain death or irreversible coma" (p. 123). In several places he refers to those who are "brain dead" as "vegetables." He also notes "that a physician who performed euthanasia was not liable before the court" (p. 122).

Rabbi Silver's essay is filled with so many errors and distortions, both Judaically and scientifically, that it is hard to know where to begin to point them out. First of all, Jewish law does have a *specific* definition of death which became stricter as more knowledge became available. The most insightful discussion of the Jewish definition of death is found in a famous responsum of R. Moses Schreiber of Pressburg (*Hatam Sofer* Y. D., no. 338).

1. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. vii ff.



If, as Silver holds, society alone can define death, then it can define life as well. Have we not seen the grotesque results of such social "definitions" of life and death in our own time?

Secondly, a suggestion was recently made by two halakhists that brain death is a valid criterion for death in Jewish law (*Hadarom* 32, 1970, pp. 59 ff.), but the suggestion was severely, and I believe successfully, criticized by many other halakhists (see *Noam* 16, 1973). Furthermore, my own rabbinic experience has taught me the error of relying on brain death as the sole criterion of death. A man in my congregation was admitted to Johns Hopkins University Hospital last year in a deep coma. After days of seemingly futile treatment his electroencephalogram read flat, and some of the physicians told his wife and daughter to start preparing for the funeral. I told them that, according to Jewish law, he was still alive, as his heart and breath continued to function. Everyone was obliged to treat him as though he were alive. Miraculously, he began to come out of the coma, and shortly thereafter he returned home and eventually went back to work.

Finally, Rabbi Silver's observation that euthanasia is not prosecutable murder applies only to a *trefah*, that is, a person suffering from a previous, *humanly caused*, fatal wound (*Sanhedrin* 78a). In this case, the cause of death is impossible to ascertain. However, to infer from this any permission of active euthanasia is as erroneous as inferring permission of murder just because the requisite witnesses for prosecution are not present (*Ibid.*, 37b). Only certain forms of passive euthanasia, such as not instituting new surgical procedures

that will only prolong agony, have a basis in Jewish law.<sup>2</sup>

The second irony of this book is that, whereas a rabbi presents a view of euthanasia which is at clear variance with normative Judaism, a secularist, the late Labor Zionist leader, Hayim Greenberg, presents a view of euthanasia very much in keeping with normative Judaism, although written in a decidedly non-halakhic idiom. Greenberg writes, "But one may also conceive of life as a mission: I was *sent* here" (p. 115). In other words, euthanasia, whether sought by the sufferer himself or by others on his or her behalf, presupposes the belief that life with all of its possibilities and meaning is fully knowable to man. Therefore, a human judgment concerning its ultimate existential value is justified. But Greenberg questions,

how could I know that the consent, the expressed desire . . . was genuine? I may mistake his passing mood, his violent reaction to the beginning of a new stage in the unfolding of his martyrdom (*Ibid.*).

What Greenberg is affirming is that the existential value of life is a mystery to man and, therefore, a judgment to terminate that life is based on arrogant presumption. The humility of this "secularist" is especially impressive when juxtaposed with the religionist's use of the word "vegetable" in describing human persons. By the way, even dead human beings are treated with a reverence not due a vegetable which is either consumed or discarded.

Rabbi Riemer's book is most welcome to all who are concerned

2. This is discussed in my paper, "Euthanasia in Jewish Law," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly* (1974), to be published in augmented form in my forthcoming book, *Law and Theology in Judaism*, 2nd Series.

with the ultimate questions of life and death and how we may think about them Jewishly. I am confident that it will become an important sourcebook for intelligent and sensitive discussion in this area.

DAVID NOVAK is the rabbi of the Beth Tfiloh Congregation in Baltimore, Maryland.

•

Also reviewed by

SAMUEL C. KLAGSBRUN

"EACH WRITER on the subject of death seems to create the impression that he has discovered this unique subject all by himself." This comment, made by one of my colleagues in the field of thanatology, reflects the somewhat skeptical reaction I am beginning to have as I try to keep up with the flood of literature on the subject pouring out of typewriters across the land. As I work my way through it, I also become aware of a sense of irritation and sadness at the views expressed by specialists who write of their experiences from limited perspectives, be they psychoanalysts, sociologists, theologians or mystics. I fear at times that the subject of death, like Solomon's baby, will be cut to pieces unless rescued by a concerned and truly caring approach that considers the totality of the experience which assaults patients, families and staff at the time of death.

In *Jewish Reflections on Death*, Jack Riemer has offered that kind of nurturing and caring approach for people facing death. This collection of essays and articles deserves excellent publicity and a distribution aimed not only at a Jewish audience but at a general and medical audience as well.

A sense of anxiety and fear per-

meates the atmosphere wherever a patient is dying. In an isolated hospital room, a nursing home, or even in a private home, families and visitors usually behave in a subdued manner, professionals maintain a distance from the patient, and a sense of alienation, isolation and loneliness takes over. In his anthology, Rabbi Riemer takes a large step toward changing that stifling atmosphere and replacing it with a sense of the continuity of life and the communal sharing of the burden of grief. The book offers the reader an opportunity to rely on the ongoing history and the authority of a tradition that belong to a people whose experience with loss is well known. And it recognizes that those who mourn require an outlet for their grief.

The laws and customs described in this book, along with the essays that explain and amplify them, are invaluable to mourners, especially those not well versed in the tradition. The essays of Elie Wiesel and Deborah Lipstadt invite the reader to share the experience of grief from a more personal viewpoint, and provide a delicate counterpoint to the theoretical and abstract explanation of the tradition.

The book falls down when it deals with the difficult and controversial subject of euthanasia. The essay on the right to kill, by Hayim Greenberg, is disappointing. And the agony of death, the pain and resentment of its presence, its unfairness and meaninglessness are not given adequate space. Death often stinks. It creates anger, hopelessness and despair. It kills the survivors as well as the victims, as evidenced by the morbidity and mortality rates among widows. The experience of death cannot be explained or rationalized. The task of the dying and of their survivors is to adapt to death and gain acceptance of the experience. This

job needs a more profound examination than the one given in the book.

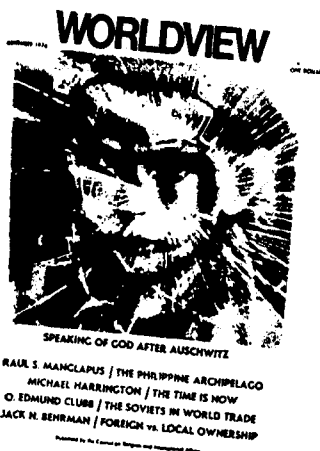
The jewel of the presentations, as I see it, is Joseph Soloveitchik's discussion of the laws governing the first day of mourning following the death of a relative. The author presents an affirmation of life along with a respect for the reality of death in an essay that ought to be part of the required curriculum of every medical and nursing school. Soloveitchik's contribution derives its strength from its full appreciation of the loss suffered through death and from its insistence, at the same time, that the mourner rejoin the living by following the specific steps which tradition demands of him.

Toward the end of the book, a group of essays focus attention on the unique experience of saying

Kaddish with the mourners' minyan. Joseph Zashin describes the special sense of warmth and comfort derived from becoming part of that quiet little community every morning. Eugene Lipman's discerning eye spots the subtle techniques used to keep a newcomer to the minyan from speeding up the accepted pace of the service. The comfort of the daily minyan is a sensitive way to help the mourner rejoin the community, and the book does well to end on that note.

Jack Riemer has provided us with a balanced, moving and learned series of articles that take us back to the tradition with respect and admiration.

SAMUEL C. KLAGSBRUN is attending psychiatrist at St. Luke's Hospital, New York.



## Meet WORLDVIEW

a monthly journal as innocent and as explosive as a hand grenade. As contradictory as both sides of an honest argument. As full of hope and hell as you'll ever see in print, anywhere . . .

*Unlike any other journal you now read, the purpose of WORLDVIEW is to put international affairs and public policy into an ethical perspective.*

Known by the company it keeps:

WORLDVIEW is Anthony Eden and Alger Hiss, Michael Harrington and Arnold Toynbee, Vine Deloria and Gunnar Myrdal, Arthur J. Goldberg and Fawaz Turki, Mark O. Hatfield and Irving Louis Horowitz, Tran Van Dinh and Sir Robert Thompson, Rosemary Ruether and Paul Ramsey, Michael Novak and John Mbiti, Sydney Ahlstrom and William V. Shannon, John H. Schaar and Christopher T. Rand, John C. Bennett and Janet Welt Smith, Gustavo Gutierrez and Kofi Awoonor.

And other writers/thinkers you don't know now, but will.

The subjects these bright, interesting people cover are as diverse as the people themselves:

Patriotic Piety, Israel & U.S. Policy, Ethics After Vietnam, The Perils of Benevolence, Selective Indignation in America, Black Americans in Africa, Realism and Hope After Niebuhr, A Theology of National Security, Internal Revenue vs. the Prophets, Military Honor After Mylai, How Wars Have Ended, World Hunger—the Religious Connection, Blacks and Jews Together, Relief vs. Liberation, The Uses and Abuses of the Past, The Literature of War, Rules of the Game for MNCs, The Philippine Archipelago, Possible Reigns in Spain . . .

If you're willing . . .

If you're willing to think about and search for a better course while others predict disaster . . . if you affirm the necessity of politics when many forms of political action have the smell of decay . . . if you believe and engage in open, intelligent, unfettered dialogue, you need WORLDVIEW.

Published by the Council on Religion and International Affairs

Editors: James Finn, Richard John Neuhaus, Peter L. Berger, Hillel Levine, Wilson Carey McWilliams, Susan Woolfson, Florence Norton

clip & mail today

WORLDVIEW • 170 East 64th Street  
New York, N.Y. 10021

Enter a one-year subscription to WORLDVIEW. 10 issues. \$10.00.\* If I don't like it at any point in the first year, I'll cancel and you must refund every nickel I've paid. Promptly.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ \$10.00 enclosed      ☐ Bill my charge card. Number below.  
Make check payable to WORLDVIEW      Master Charge \_\_\_\_\_  
Bank Americard \_\_\_\_\_

\*A savings of \$2.50 over the newsstand price.

065

## ***Index to Volume 24 (1975)***

---

### **Articles**

<i><b>Author</b></i>	<i><b>Title</b></i>	<i><b>Page</b></i>
ACKERMAN, WALTER I.	The Americanization of Jewish Education	416
BISK, TSVI	The Question of Secular Judaism	457
BOKSER, BEN ZION	Problems in Bio-Medical Ethics: A Jewish Perspective	134
BRANSON, ROY	The Individual and the Commune: A Critique of Martin Buber's Social Philosophy	82
BROWN, MICHAEL	Is There A Jewish Way to Fight?	466
CHIEL, SAMUEL	Janusz: Korczak: Assimilationist or Positive Jew?	319
DAGI, TEODORO FORCHT	The Paradox of Euthanasia	157
ELOVITZ, MARK H.	The Bio-Medical Challenges to Law and Morality	144
FEIN, RICHARD J.	Jewish Fiction in America	406
FRIEDMAN, NORMAN L.	Jewish Popular Culture in Contemporary America	263
FRIEDMAN, THEODORE	From "Leshon Hakodesh" to "Shok Totali"	63
GOLDFELD, ANNE	Women As Sources of Torah in the Rabbinic Tradition	245
GORDIS, ROBERT	The Two Faces of Freud	194
GRAUBART, JUDAH L.	The Vatican and the Jews: Cynicism and Indifference	168
GREEN, ARTHUR	The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea	446
HALPERIN, IRVING	In Jerusalem: Reflections on Teaching the Holocaust	339
HOROWITZ, HERMAN L.	The Sh'ma Reconsidered	476
HOROWITZ, RIVKA	Judaism Despite Christianity	306
KOHANSKI, ALEXANDER S.	Martin Buber's Philosophy of Judaism	69
KOLLIN, GILBERT	The Advisability of Seeking Converts	49
KORN, EUGENE B.	Ethics and Jewish Law	201
MALLER, ALLEN S.	Mixed Marriage and Reform Rabbis	39

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Page</i>
MATT, HERSHEL	How Shall A Believing Jew View Christianity?	391
MEYER, MICHAEL A.	Where Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?	329
REINES, CHAIM W.	Beauty in the Bible and the Talmud	100
ROSHWALD, MORDECAI	Marginal Gentiles in Israel	7
RUDIN, A. JAMES	Brandeis and deHaas: Two Conflicting Styles of Jewish Leadership	296
SCHULWEIS, HAROLD M.	Charles Hartshorne and the Defenders of Heschel	58
SIGAL, PHILLIP	Elements of Male Chauvinism in Classical Halakhah	226
SLATER, MATTHEW D.	The Jews of Cochin	482
STEPELEVICH, LAWRENCE S.	Hegel and Judaism	215
SWYHART, BARBARA ANN	Reconstructionism: <i>Hokhmah</i> as an Ethical Principle	436
TEMKIN, SEFTON	Orthodox With Moderation: A Sketch of Joseph Herman Hertz	278
VOGEL, LÉON	Freud and Judaism: An Analysis in the Light of His Correspondence (Translation by Murray Sachs)	181
WEISBORD, ROBERT G.	Israel and the Black Hebrew Israelites	23
WOLOWELSKY, JOEL B.	A Note on Shabbat Mourning	97

# Reviews

<i>Reviewer</i>	<i>Book and Author</i>	<i>Page</i>
BERGER, ALAN	A Passion For Truth by Abraham Joshua Heschel	499
BLAU, JOSEPH L.	A History of Judaism: Volume I, From Abraham to Maimonides by Daniel Jeremy Silver  Volume II, Europe and The New World by Bernard Martin	495
BOKSER, BEN ZION	Rabbi Kook As A Mystic Review-Essay on Mishnato Shel Harav Kook (Hebrew) by Zvi Yanon	
GERTEL, ELLIOT B.	Law and Theology in Judaism by David Novak	365

<i>Author</i>	<i>Book and Author</i>	<i>Page</i>
GORDIS, ROBERT	The Torah and Modern Man Review-Essay on The Torah—A Modern Commentary. I. Genesis ed. by Gunther W. Plaut	348
KLAGSBRUN, SAMUEL C.	Jewish Reflections On Death ed. by Jack Riemer	507
NOVAK, DAVID	Jewish Reflections On Death ed. by Jack Riemer	502
NOVAK, WILLIAM	Notes on An Endangered Species and Others by Mordecai Richler	124
SEGAL, LESTER A.	The Agunah by Chaim Grade	378
SLAVIN, MORRIS	The Jewish Bund in Russia From its Origin in 1905 by Henry J. Tobias and Trotsky and The Jews by Joseph Nedava	372
WEISS-ROSMARIN, TRUDE	Judaism and Modern Philosophy Review-Essay on Major Themes in Modern Philosophies of Judaism by Eliezer Berkovits	354
WISCHNITZER, RACHEL	La Haggada Eluminée by Mendel Metzger	369



**STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION** (Act of August 12, 1970, Section 3685, title 39, United States Code): 1. Date of Filing: September 22, 1975. 2. Title of Publication: Judaism. 3. Frequency of Issue: Quarterly. 4. Location of Known Office of Publication: 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028. 5. Location of Headquarters or General Business Offices of the Publishers: 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028. 6. Names and addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Editor: Robert Gordis, 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028. Managing Editor: Ruth B. Waxman, 15 East 84th Street, New York, New York 10028. 7. Owner: American Jewish Congress, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028, non-profit, non-stockholding. 8. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None. 9. For completion by non-profit organizations authorized to mail at special rates: The purpose, function, and non-profit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months. 10. Extent and nature of circulation. A. Total number of copies (net press run). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 3,650. Single issue nearest filing date 3,800. B. Paid circulation: 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 210. Single issue nearest filing date 200. 2. Mail subscriptions. Average number of copies during preceding 12 months 3,020. Single issue nearest filing date 3,214. C. Total paid circulation. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 3,230. Single issue nearest filing date 3,414. D. Free distribution (including samples) by mail, carrier or other means. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 125. Single issue nearest filing date 125. E. Total distribution (sum of C and D). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 3,395. Single issue nearest filing date 3,565. F. Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 245. Single issue nearest filing date 235. G. Sum of E and F—should equal net press run shown in A). Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months 3,650. Single issue nearest to filing date 3,800. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Ruth B. Waxman, Managing Editor.

# JUDAISM

\$2.25

FALL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED